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Contents

Notes on Contributors	x
Acknowledgement	xv
Introduction: A 2020 Vision of Plautus <i>George Fredric Franko and Dorota Dutsch</i>	1
1 The State of Roman Theater, c. 200 BCE <i>Timothy J. Moore</i>	17
2 Plautus and Greek Drama <i>Sebastiana Nervegna</i>	31
3 Stages and Stagecraft <i>Anne H. Groton</i>	47
4 Actors and Audience <i>Isabella Tardin Cardoso</i>	61
5 <i>Nouo Modo Nouom Aliquid Inuentum</i> : Plautine Priorities <i>David Christenson</i>	77
6 Plays of Mistaken Identity <i>Costas Panayotakis</i>	93
7 Plautus and the Marriage Plot <i>Sharon L. James</i>	109
8 Stock Characters and Stereotypes <i>Shawn O'Bryhim</i>	123
9 The <i>Servus Callidus</i> in Charge: Plays of Deception <i>Ferdinand Stürner</i>	135
10 To Hell and Back: Comedy, Cult, and the House of the <i>Meretrix</i> <i>Catherine Connors</i>	151

11	The Wife in Charge, the Husband Humiliated: Stock Characters in Evolution <i>Barbara K. Gold</i>	165
12	Archetypal Character Studies: Masculinity and Power <i>Anne Feltovich</i>	179
13	Plotting the Romance: Plautus' <i>Rudens</i> , <i>Cistellaria</i> , and <i>Poenulus</i> <i>Stavros Frangoulidis</i>	193
14	Tragicomedy and Paratragedy: Plautus's <i>Amphitruo</i> , <i>Captivi</i> , and <i>Rudens</i> <i>Walter Stockert</i>	207
15	The Language of Plautus <i>Peter Barrios-Lech</i>	221
16	Metatheater and Improvisation in Plautus <i>Christopher Bungard</i>	237
17	Music and Meter in Plautus <i>T.H.M. Gellar-Goad</i>	251
18	Comic Technique in Plautus's <i>Asinaria</i> and <i>Casina</i> <i>Martin T. Dinter</i>	269
19	Plautus and the Topography of His World <i>Sophia Papaioannou</i>	287
20	Warfare and Imperialism in and Around Plautus <i>Paul J. Burton</i>	301
21	Religion in and Around Plautus <i>Seth A. Jeppesen</i>	317
22	Gender and Sexuality in Plautus <i>Serena S. Witzke</i>	331
23	Owners and Slaves in and Around Plautus <i>Amy Richlin</i>	347
24	Slave Labor in Plautus <i>Roberta Stewart</i>	361
25	Plautus and His Dramatic Successors in the Republican Period <i>Gesine Manuwald</i>	379
26	<i>Alii Rhetorica Tongent</i> : Plautus and Public Speech <i>Emilia A. Barbiero</i>	393
27	The Textual Tradition of Plautus <i>Rolando Ferri</i>	407

28	The Medieval Reception of Plautus's <i>Aulularia</i> : <i>Querolus</i> and Vitalis Blesensis <i>Antony Augoustakis</i>	419
29	From Ferrara to Venice: Plautus in Vernacular and Early Italian Comedy (1486–1530) <i>Gianni Guastella</i>	429
30	Plautus in Early Modern England <i>George Fredric Franko</i>	445
31	Reception Today: Theater and Movies <i>Rodrigo T. Gonçalves</i>	461
32	Trends in Plautus Translation <i>James Tatum</i>	473
	Index	489
	Index Locorum Plautinorum	495

Notes on Contributors

Antony Augoustakis is Professor of Classics and Langan Professorial Scholar at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He is the editor of *The Classical Journal* and author of *Statius, Thebaid 8* (2016), *Motherhood and the Other: Fashioning Female Power in Flavian Epic* (2010) and *Plautus' Mercator* (2009). He has edited many volumes, most recently *Fides in Flavian Literature* (2019), *Campania in the Flavian Poetic Imagination* (2019), and *Epic Heroes on Screen* (2018).

Emilia A. Barbiero is Assistant Professor of Classics at New York University. Her research focuses on Roman republican literature in general and Plautine comedy in particular, as well as ancient letters.

Peter Barrios-Lech is Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. He is interested in the sociolinguistics and pragmatics of Greek and Latin and how data-based approaches can help illuminate our understanding of ancient works. He is the author of *Linguistic Interaction in Roman Comedy* (2016).

Christopher Bungard has taught at Butler University since 2008. Along with courses in

Latin and in translation, he offers a seminar for first-year students that focuses on humor across the globe and throughout time. His research interests include Plautus, especially the *servi callidi*, and the ways that ancient drama remains relevant for the modern day through performance, drama, and modern music. His translation of Plautus' *Truculentus* was performed by the Butler Theatre Department.

Paul J. Burton is a senior lecturer in Roman History at the Australian National University. He is the author of *Friendship and Empire* (2011), *Rome and the Third Macedonian War* (2017), and *Roman Imperialism* (2019), as well as numerous scholarly articles and reviews.

Isabella Tardin Cardoso is Professor of Classics at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp) in Brazil and a Visiting Professor at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. Her principal areas of research are Roman comedy and the idea of the "world as a theater" in Roman literature. Her publications include *Estico de Plauto* (2006) and *Trompe l'oeil: Philologie und Illusion* (2011). She is currently researching Brazilian reception of Classics and Roman theater history in the time of Augustus.

David Christenson is Professor of Classics at the University of Arizona. His research interests, in addition to Greek and Roman comedy, include late Republican/early Imperial Latin literature and culture, and translation studies. He is the author of Cambridge “green and yellow” commentaries on *Amphitruo* (2000) and *Pseudolus* (2020), and a Bloomsbury Ancient Comedy Companion to *Casina* (2019). His three volumes of translations include *Hysterical Laughter: Four Ancient Comedies about Women* (2015).

Catherine Connors is Professor in the Department of Classics at the University of Washington, Seattle, where she has been a member of the faculty since 1990. Her current research focuses on ancient literary representations of nature and geography and of women and family life. She is the author of *Petronius the Poet* (1998) and essays on Roman comedy, satire and epic, the ancient Greek and Roman novels, and Strabo.

Martin T. Dinter, PhD (Cambridge) is senior lecturer in Latin Literature and Language at King’s College London, UK. He is the author of *Anatomizing Civil War: Studies in Lucan’s Epic Technique* (2012), co-editor of *A Companion to the Neronian Age* (Malden, 2013), and editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Comedy* (2019). He has published on Virgil, Horace, Roman Declamation, Seneca, and Flavian epic and is currently preparing a monograph on Cato the Elder.

Dorota Dutsch is Associate Professor of Classics at the University of California Santa Barbara. She is the author of *Feminine Discourse in Roman Comedy: Of Echoes and Voices* (OUP, 2008) and *Pythagorean Women Philosophers: Between Belief and*

Suspicion (OUP, forthcoming in 2020), and coeditor of *Women in Roman Republican Drama*, with Sharon James and David Konstan (Wisconsin, 2015); *The Fall of Cities in the Mediterranean: Commemoration in Literature, Folk-song and Liturgy*, with Mary Bachvarova and Ann Suter (CUP, 2015); *Ancient Obscenities: Their Nature and Use in the Ancient Greek and Roman Worlds*, with Ann Suter (University of Michigan Press, 2015); *A Handbook to Classical Reception: Eastern and Central Europe*, with Zara Martirosova Torlone and Dana Munteanu (Wiley Blackwell, 2017).

Anne Feltovich is Assistant Professor of Classics at Hamilton College. Her publications include “The Many Shapes of Sisterhood in Roman Comedy” (in the volume *Women in Roman Republican Drama*, ed. Dutsch, James, and Konstan) and an article in *Helios* titled “In Defense of Myrrhina: Friendship between Women in Plautus’ *Casina*.” She is currently working on a manuscript on *Women’s Social Bonds in Greek and Roman Comedy*.

Rolando Ferri is Professor of Latin Language and Literature at the University of Pisa. He studied at Pisa, Princeton, and London, where he was Momigliano Fellow in the Arts (1993–1996). He has worked on Augustan and early Imperial Roman poetry and drama (*I dispiaceri di un epicureo*, 1993; *Octavia: a Play Attributed to Seneca*, 2003) and on bilingual glossaries and Hermeneumata. He is generally interested in the history of the Latin language and on linguistic variation in Latin.

Stavros Frangoulidis is Professor of Latin at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He has written on Roman comedy, Senecan tragedy, and the Latin novel. With

Theodore Papangelis, Gesine Manuwald, and Stephen Harrison he has edited volumes on Latin Literature for Trends in Classics-Supplementary Volumes. His books include: *Handlung und Nebenhandlung: Theater, Metatheater und Gattungsbewusstsein in der römischen Komödie* (1997); *Roles and Performances in Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (2001); and *Witches, Isis and Narrative: Approaches to Magic in Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (2008).

George Fredric Franko is Professor of Classical Studies at Hollins University, where he holds the Berry Professorship in Liberal Arts for excellence in teaching literature. He has a PhD in Classical Studies and an MLitt in Shakespeare and Performance. In addition to publishing in classics, he has directed productions of Plautus in Latin and acted in plays of Shakespeare.

T.H.M. Gellar-Goad is Assistant Professor of Classical Languages at Wake Forest University. He specializes in Latin poetry, especially the funny stuff: Roman comedy, Roman erotic elegy, Roman satire, and – if you believe him – the allegedly philosophical poet Lucretius.

Barbara K. Gold is Edward North Professor Emerita at Hamilton College. She has published widely on satire, lyric and elegy, feminist theory, sex and gender, comedy, and late antiquity. Her books include: *Literary Patronage in Greece and Rome*; *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy* (ed.); *Roman Literature, Gender and Reception* (co-ed.); and *Sex and Gender in Medieval and Renaissance Texts: The Latin Tradition* (co-ed.). Her latest book is *Perpetua: Athlete of God* (2018); *A Guide to Latin Elegy and Lyric* is forthcoming.

Rodrigo T. Gonçalves is Professor of Classics at the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR) in Brazil, where he received his PhD. He completed his postdoctoral research at the Centre Léon Robin, Paris (ENS-Sorbonne-CNRS). His recent work deals with poetic and rhythmic translations of the classics, the reception of Roman comedy (especially in Brazil), and the philosophy of language and translation. He is currently working on a full hexametric translation of Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*.

Anne H. Groton is Professor of Classics and Chair of the Department of Classics at St. Olaf College, where she has taught since 1981. Besides publishing articles on Menander, Aristophanes, Plautus, Caecilius Statius, and Terence, she has directed more than 20 student productions of Plautus, each performed in a musical mixture of English and Latin.

Gianni Guastella is professor of Latin Language and Literature at the University of Siena. His most recent publication is the book *Word of Mouth: Fama and Its Personifications in Art and Literature from Ancient Rome to the Middle Ages* (2016).

Sharon L. James is Professor of Classics at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She published *Learned Girls and Male Persuasion: Gender and Reading in Roman Love Elegy* (2003) and articles on elegy, New Comedy, rape, gender, and women in antiquity. She co-edited the Blackwell *Companion to Women in Antiquity* (2011) and *Women in the Classical World* (2017). She co-directed the NEH 2012 Summer Institute, “Roman Comedy in Performance” and has a forthcoming book, *Women in New Comedy*.

Seth A. Jeppesen is assistant professor of Classical Studies at Brigham Young University. His research deals primarily with the intersection of Roman religious performance and Roman drama, especially in the comedies of Plautus.

Gesine Manuwald is Professor of Latin at University College London (UCL) and has published widely on early Roman drama, including *Roman Drama: A Reader* (2010), *Roman Republican Theatre* (2011), and an edition of the fragments of Ennius (2012).

Timothy J. Moore is John and Penelope Biggs Distinguished Professor of Classics at Washington University in St. Louis. His publications include *Artistry and Ideology: Livy's Vocabulary of Virtue* (1989); *The Theater of Plautus* (1998); *Music in Roman Comedy* (2012); *Roman Theatre* (2012); a translation of Terence's *Phormio* (in *Greek and Roman Comedy*, ed. O'Bryhim, 2001); articles on Latin literature, the teaching of Greek and Latin, ancient music, American musical theater, and Japanese comedy; and a database of the Meters of Roman Comedy (<http://romancomedy.wulib.wustl.edu>).

Sebastiana Nervegna is a Future Fellow funded by the Australian Research Council, and she currently works at Monash University, in Melbourne. She is the author of several works on ancient drama and its afterlife, including *Menander in Antiquity: The Contexts of Reception* (2013) and a forthcoming monograph on the theatrical reception of Greek tragedy.

Shawn O'Bryhim is Professor of Classics at Franklin & Marshall College. He has published on Greek and Roman comedy, Near Eastern and Greek religion, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and animal behavior in Livy

and Catullus. He is the editor of *Greek and Roman Comedy* (University of Texas Press).

Costas Panayotakis is Professor of Latin at the University of Glasgow and himself an identical twin. Author of *Theatrum Arbitri: Theatrical Elements in the Satyrica of Petronius* (1995), *Decimus Laberius: The Fragments* (2010), and of annotated translations (into Modern Greek) of select plays of Plautus and Terence, he is currently preparing critical editions (with facing translation and commentary) of the fragments of Atellane comedy, the moral maxims associated with the mimographer Publilius, and Petronius's "Dinner at Trimalchio's."

Sophia Papaioannou is Professor of Latin literature at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Her publications include *Terence and Interpretation* (2014), the first translation of *Miles Gloriosus* in Greek, and the first annotated edition of the play in any language since 1963 (2nd 2010). She has coedited (with A.K. Petrides) *New Perspectives on Postclassical Comedy* (2009), is coediting (with C. Demetriou) *Plautus Doctus: New Insights into Cultural and Literary Aspects of Plautine Comedy*, and is preparing a commentary on Plautus' *Curculio*.

Amy Richlin is Distinguished Professor of Classics at UCLA. She has published widely on history and theory, Roman sexuality, Roman women, and Plautus, and is the author of *Slave Theater in the Roman Republic: Plautus and Popular Comedy* (2017). Her translations of *Curculio*, *Persa*, and *Poenulus* appeared in 2005 as *Rome and the Mysterious Orient: Three Plays by Plautus* (University of California Press).

Roberta Stewart is Professor of Classics at Dartmouth College. She has authored two

books, *Public Office in Early Rome: Ritual Procedure and Political Practice* (1998) and *Plautus and Roman Slavery* (2012). She has published articles on Roman religion, Roman numismatics, Latin literature, and Latin lexicography (for the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* in Munich).

Walter Stockert, born in 1940 in Vienna, Austria, studied Latin and Greek under the direction of Walther Kraus, Albin Lesky, and others. He was teacher of Latin at Viennese gymnasia. He secured his permission to teach at the University of Vienna with a Commentary on Euripides's *Iphigenia in Aulis*. Besides Greek Tragedy he has also done substantial work on Plautus, including editions and commentaries on *Aulularia* (1983) and *Cistellaria* (2012).

Ferdinand Stürner teaches Classics at Julius-Maximilian-University of Würzburg, Germany. He has published on Roman

Comedy (*Monologe bei Plautus*, 2011), Flavian Epic, and Neo-Latin Literature.

James Tatum is Aaron Lawrence Professor of Classics Emeritus at Dartmouth. In collaboration with William W. Cook he produced his translations of six Plautus comedies that were performed at Dartmouth and elsewhere. His translations of *Truculentus*, *Casina*, and *Bacchides* were published by Johns Hopkins in 1983 (*Plautus: The Darker Comedies*) and remain in print to the present day.

Serena S. Witzke received her PhD in Classics, specializing in New Comedy, from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her article "Harlots, Tarts and Hussies?" on terminology for sex labor in comedy won the Women's Classical Caucus prize for Best Published Article in 2016. Witzke's research focuses on ancient comedy, gender and sexuality in antiquity, and classical reception. She teaches at Wesleyan University.

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GFF DMD

Introduction: A 2020 Vision of Plautus

George Fredric Franko and Dorota Dutsch

*huic Graece nomen est Thesauro fabulae:
Philemo scripsit, Plautus vortit barbare,
nomen Trinummo fecit, nunc hoc vos rogat
ut liceat possidere hanc nomen fabulam.*

This play in Greek is called *The Treasure*.
Philemon wrote it, Plautus spun a barbarian version,
gave it the name *Trinummus*, and now asks you
that this play may keep this name. (18–21)¹

These verses from the prologue of *Trinummus* communicate bundles of information to audiences and readers. We learn that the plot is adapted from a Greek ancestor; that a certain Philemon wrote the Greek script; that Plautus renovates the story by making a Roman “barbarian version”; and that Plautus renamed the play with an ambiguous joke, for the *Tri*-prefix in *Tri-nummus* could suggest both a modest “Three Penny Opera” and a grandiose “Super-Bitcoin” (cf. Fontaine 2010, p. 20, n. 29). To open our *Companion*, let’s unpack these bundles more carefully, starting with the identity of the Roman playwright.

Titus Maccius *Plautus*? Other prologues – four from Plautus, three from Terence – call him “Plautus”; *Asinaria* calls him Maccus; and *Mercator* calls him Titus Maccius. The tripartite Roman name familiar to us from later aristocrats, such as “Gaius Julius Caesar,” sounds lofty and contrived for a third-century BCE playwright, especially if Plautus came from upland Umbria rather than urbanizing Rome. Two parts of the name suggest a pseudonym derived from theater: Maccus the clown; and Plautus the mime-actor. Moreover, “Titus,” like “Dick,” was slang for “penis.” So perhaps the name “Titus Maccius Plautus” is a saucy pen name for an individual or even a collaborative team, not unlike “Monty

Python” (Gratwick 1973; character names in Plautus do convey jokes or thematic significance, see López López 1991). The second-century CE scholar Aulus Gellius claimed that 130 scripts circulated under Plautus’s name; while not impossible, the claim suggests exaggeration or shared attributions as much as it proves Plautus’s popularity. His traditional dates (born 254, active from c.210 till death in 184; all ancient dates BCE unless noted) seem reliable enough. His purported home of Sarsina seems reasonable, especially since most Latin authors of the Republic were not born in Rome itself, and the tradition will likely be cemented by Sarsina’s recent support of productions and studies in Plautus’s honor (the 1998–2017 *Lecturae Plautinae Sarsinates*, ed. R. Raffaelli and A. Tontini, published by QuattroVenti). Other biographical data found in later ancient sources have little independent authority. The anecdote that Plautus had experience as an actor or stagehand is plausible, for his scripts historically have fared better on the stage than on the page. That he lost all his money and worked in a mill is less credible and probably a fanciful reconstruction based upon threatened punishment of slaves in his comedies.

Greek *fabula*, Philemon *scripsit*? *Fabula*, not unlike Greek “*mythos*,” has a wide range of meanings that include “play,” “story,” “narration,” “scene,” and “myth,” as well as the English derivative “fable.” Plautus uses *fabula* to mean both specifically the “play being staged” and also more generally the “story.” Plautus lifted the script (*scripsit*) from an earlier Greek playwright, Philemon. Philemon (c.362–262) wrote dramas not in the genre of fantastic and salty Aristophanic “Old Comedy” of fifth-century Athens but in the smoother and cosmopolitan “New Comedy” of the Hellenistic age. We do not have any of the scripts Philemon wrote. From his more famous peer Menander (342–291) we have one complete script unearthed in 1959 (*Dyskolos*), one almost complete (*Samia*), and substantial papyrus fragments of a half dozen others. Our corpus of Menander, though still probably less than 5% of his total output, is now large enough to enable substantive rather than speculative exploration of his dramaturgy, stagecraft, reception, and interaction with social contexts (Sommerstein 2013). The study of Menander has dominated our perception of Greek New Comedy, but that dominance must not obscure the fact that we have lost hundreds of scripts from dozens of other Greek playwrights in that genre. For decades Plautus and his fellow Roman dramatists plundered that treasury of Greek New Comic scripts and boasted of the thievery. Where plagiarism attempts to hide the theft of an earlier work, intertextuality celebrates the theft and renovations, encouraging audiences and readers to appreciate the interplay between the earlier work and the new version. Plautus’ bold statement demands that we ponder the process by which all “mature poets steal” and sometimes even appropriate another culture’s classics, from Vergil to Bob Dylan (Thomas 2017, pp. 193–225).

Vortit barbare? Plautus touts his transformation of the original Greek script, inviting us to evaluate both the process (*vortit*) and product (*barbare*) of his renovations. Unfortunately, scholars could not assess his process through direct, detailed comparison of Roman adaptation and Greek original for *Trinummus* or any other play because we had no Greek scripts that Plautus adapted. An opportunity emerged in 1968 with the discovery and publication of about a hundred lines from Menander’s *Dis Exapaton*, the model for Plautus’s *Bacchides* (Handley 1968; Gaiser 1970; Anderson 1993). Comparison of the parallel passages exploded some earlier theories of Plautus’s relations to his originals and largely confirmed the insights of Eduard Fraenkel (1922, 1960, 2007), who identified

patterns of Plautine thought and expression that indicated zesty free adaptation rather than incompetent slavish translation. Despite the dangers and limitations of comparing fragments of Greek New Comedy with full texts of Plautus, recent studies have moved far beyond Fraenkel in confirming Plautus's reputation as a brilliant comic poet. An older tendency to dismiss him as a pale imitator of Greek comedy, worthy of study not in his own right but only to reconstruct lost Greek plays, has faded, and he is currently celebrated for creating a distinctly Roman comic experience.

In some ways Roman comedy inscribes itself as a continuation of the Greek tradition, in other ways it resists the tradition, but in all ways it aggressively appropriates and renovates the genre to conform to Roman tastes, venues, and culture. Greek New Comic playwrights wrote scripts for performance in permanent theaters, with the units of action divided into five acts by four choral interludes, and the dialogue performed by no more than three speaking actors. Roman New Comedy, while nominally set in Greece and inhabited by Greeks, presented characters that spoke and sang in Latin for their Roman audience in Rome, hence *barbare*. Roman stages were temporary, shoehorned into available spaces in the civic and religious epicenter of an expanding empire. No chorus meant no choral interludes and no act divisions, generating continuous and often frenetic action. As with the Greeks, all lines were composed in verse, but the alternation of unaccompanied speech with musically enhanced passages created arcs in the action that effectively replaced the hard divisions of four choral interludes. The Roman playwrights acknowledged no limit on the number of speaking actors other than economic or dramatic necessities. Given these fundamental differences in staging, Plautus rightly claims to produce a culturally and theatrically Roman version (*vortit*, “turned,” the root of “version”) rather than a simple Latin translation. One might usefully dub the process, to borrow Michel Garneau's Québécois term, “tradaptation” (Hoenselaars and Bassnett 2012, part III). *Barbare* is a dense, polyvalent signifier: linguistic (non-Greek speakers speak *barbare* rather than *Graece*); ethnic (non-Greeks are barbarians); and aesthetic (non-Greek theater is barbarous).

This Companion

We are delighted to offer the following collection of studies devoted to Plautus by a team of international scholars. In the past decade, Plautus has received some attention in several excellent edited volumes devoted to ancient comedy: *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Comedy* (Fontaine and Scafuro 2014), *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Comedy* (Dinter 2019), *Women in Roman Republican Drama* (Dutsch et al. 2015), as well as *A Companion to Terence* (Augoustais and Traill 2013). The explosion of diverse trends in Plautine scholarship in recent years warrants, however, a book presenting and consolidating some of the exciting progress. In English alone, readers have been treated to significant monographs on Plautine comedy as literature, theater, and social history (e.g. Sharrock 2009; Moore 2012; Stewart 2012; Gunderson 2015; Richlin 2017). This *Companion* showcases two ideas: that the extant scripts acquire fresh meaning when reread or embodied on stage; and that the scripts are embedded in contemporary Roman social discourse, however tenuous our reconstructions of those historical events and theatrical phenomena may be.

We contend that three approaches have significantly reinvigorated Plautine studies. First, the emergence of performance criticism treats Plautus as author of plays to be seen rather than works to be read. For example, attention to the extra-textual elements essential for performance (e.g. music, metatheater, and improvisation) has demanded reassessment of the scripts. Second, as the Greek term “drama” derives from “doing,” we now consider what characters *do* and how plays *function* more than who the characters *are* and what data the plays *record*. Current study of Plautine texts as documents implicated in social history emphasizes a character’s active performance of a social role rather than passive occupation of an assigned social status. Studies focusing on how individuals perform their gender and class have broken new ground in understanding Plautus as reflector, generator, or subverter (*vortere* again!) of Roman social practices and ideologies. Third, recognition of Plautus as a dramatic poet coincides with a shift in scholarly attention from tradition to reception. Where tradition values fidelity to the predecessor based upon any verbal, structural, or thematic parallels detected through source criticism (*Quellenforschung*), reception values the agency of the later artists in their inventive renovations. Alison Sharrock (2009, p. x) laments her introduction to Roman comedy as a mere coda to Greek tradition, “a stereotype-ridden exercise in lamentable literary secondariness.” The more we view Latin literature itself not as derivative but as innovative, the more we appreciate Plautus as a creative adapter of his Greek predecessors, rather like Catullus and Horace, who renovate Sappho and Alcaeus, or Vergil with Homer (West and Woodman 1979; Feeney 2016).

While Wiley-Blackwell’s *A Companion to Terence* devotes a chapter apiece to the six comedies of Plautus’s successor, we avoid a collection of discrete explications of the 21 plays in favor of thematic chapters. While we recognize the drawback in potentially slighting someone’s favorite play, we believe that thematic approaches better illuminate commonalities within the extant scripts and allow different chapters to provide multiple perspectives on individual plays. The *Companion* divides into four manners of viewing the scripts and four areas of inquiry: **retrospection** of the plays’ theatrical background; **introspection** of the scripts for their plots, characters, and dramatic techniques; **circumspection** of how the plays embody and embed contemporary Roman social history; and **prospection** of how the scripts transmitted the plays through the centuries. The rest of this introduction attempts to highlight and integrate very briefly some salient points of each chapter and to indicate the changing climate of Plautine studies (fuller biographies for which will be found in the References of each chapter).

Retrospection: The Background of Roman Comedy

We open the *Companion* with TIMOTHY MOORE’s judicious assessment of the ancient evidence for Roman theatrical activity in the era of Plautus. While we know that the Romans had enjoyed public theatrical performances for decades before Plautus, we cannot accept at face value the agenda-driven accounts of them from centuries later, such as that found in the historian Livy. We can safely deduce that the Romans witnessed performances of theatrical and paratheatrical activities springing from local, Italian, and Greek traditions – including dance, unscripted farce, and scripted drama in the genres of comedy, tragedy, and history – and that Plautus’s plays implicitly draw upon and explicitly allude to

those performance activities. For example, jokes about stock characters in improvisatory Atellan farce suggest that Plautine comedies riff on their progenitors; but without any script of Atellan farce from Plautus's era, we cannot accurately assess how those allusions function as mockery, homage, inside jokes, or clichés. For our study of Plautus's Greek roots, SEBASTIANA NERVEGNA supplements old-fashioned textual analysis of Plautus's *Bacchides* and Menander's *Dis Exapaton* with the visual evidence on two vases to provide some new perspectives on the central question of how Plautus transformed his Greek originals.

The players, magistrates funding the festivals, and hawkers of food, drink, and other merchandise all profited in some way from the plays, which – put crassly – required putting butts in seats. What seats? ANNE GROTON combs the evidence of Roman topography, vase painting, artwork, and later literary accounts to corroborate and refine the evidence for stages and stagecraft encoded within Plautus's scripts. The curious fact that the Romans had no permanent, purpose-built theater until 55 suggests that the transient quality of Roman drama was one of its attractions rather than an impediment. Temporary stages exploited available plazas with limited seating areas to energize an intimate playing space for roughly 1300–3000 spectators (far smaller venues than for the 5000–30000 spectators of Greek theaters). Architectural necessities generate theatrical virtues. For example, the intimacy of the space, with no orchestral pit to separate actors from audience, makes the divisions minimal and porous between actor and audience, or fictive Greek setting and visible Roman topography.

Staging a Plautine production required the work of many individuals, including actors, musicians, and an *actor* or *dominus gregis* – an “actor-manager” or even “producer.” The professional theater troupes were multitalented units. All actors of the *palliata* were male, even for female roles, and masked, allowing one actor to play multiple roles. Over half of the lines were delivered with musical accompaniment. The versatile performers could act, sing, dance, and improvise in verse in accordance with rhythm and melody. ISABELLA TARDIN CARDOSO links the *vorsipellis* (“skin-changing,” meaning “skilled” and “versatile”; the same root as *vortit*) actor with the *vorsipellis* audience, a mixed group from all socio-economic, legal, ethnic, educational, and gender groups. The old model of a monolithic Roman audience of naive clodhoppers, a model perhaps originating in Terence's prologues (which at *Hecyra* 4 even disparages them as a *populus stupidus*), has been replaced. Current theoretical reconstructions of the plays' primary audience range from a restricted elite (Fontaine 2010b) to a swelling slave class (Richlin 2017). Whatever the precise composition, the popularity of Plautus confirms that the varied components of the audience groups – men, women, free, slave, soldiers, senators, shopkeepers, farmers, etc. – appreciated the plots, acting, metatheater, and overt or covert social commentary explored in this *Companion*.

Introspection: The Analysis of Plautine Scripts

We can begin with observing that an early twentieth-century obsession with lost Greek originals and attempts to disentangle Greek versus Roman elements, the so-called *Plautinisches und Attisches*, has abated (Leo 1912; Fraenkel 1922; Jachmann 1931; Zagagi

1980). Such analysis continues to enrich our understanding, but, barring discovery of new specimens of Greek New Comedy, the field has been thoroughly excavated. In the later twentieth century, Gregor Vogt-Spira complicated the model of a simple binary between scripted Greek and re-scripted Roman by proposing a third limb: oral Italian extempore farce. The attention to formative oral Italian elements within the literary *palliata* spurred a prolific approach to Plautus, the so-called “Freiburg School” of Eckard Lefèvre, Ekkehard Stärk, and their colleagues, whose monographs and collected volumes have been published by Gunther Narr Verlag for the *Scriptoralia* series (Benz et al. 1995; Lefèvre et al. 1991; Vogt-Spira 2001). Their seductive studies assert improvisation (*Stegreifspiel*) as a crucial element of Plautine drama. While *Stegreifspiel* has had the salutary effect of turning our attention from retrospection of antecedents to actual staging, at times the Freiburg School has pushed claims for Plautine originality too far by replacing one Will-o’-the-Wisp (lost Greek scripts) with another (unrecorded and un-recordable improvisations).

With the onset of the twenty-first century, performance criticism has directed our study of Plautus as dramatist to interrogation of how his scripts function (e.g. Slater 1985; Moore 1998; Marshall 2006). Of course, we cannot ever recover or recreate an original performance. We can, however, interrogate the scripts more closely as open-ended signifiers whose meanings are embodied in performance through an actor’s choice and an audience’s reception, and thereby propose an interpretive complement to traditional philology. The 2012 American institute on “Roman Comedy in Performance,” sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities (Safran and Fulkerson 2015; online videos at Moore and James 2015), gives only a sample of the progress made through performance criticism and invites others to continue that progress.

We hope that the recent progress made in Plautine studies finds a receptive ear outside the world of classics. Far too often, students and scholars in other fields who do not read Plautus directly but rely upon the potted summaries transmitted in handbooks and web-pages assume that the goal of his New Comedy is romantic marriage. At the risk of reifying and ripping a venerable straw man, the influential expositions of Northrop Frye can exemplify how criticism outside classics sometimes misleadingly implies that Plautus shared the same dramatic priorities as Terence and Menander:

The plot structure of Greek New Comedy, as transmitted by Plautus and Terence, [is] less a form than a formula [...] that a young man wants a young woman, that his desire is resisted by some opposition, usually paternal ... At the end of the play the device in the plot that brings hero and heroine together causes a new society to crystallize around the hero. (1957, p. 163)

Frye’s synthesis repays reading because, even when one disagrees on details, it is far more insightful and nuanced than this snippet suggests. But for us, the quotations can serve as a template against which all the plays of Plautus rebel or deviate to greater or lesser degree. The *palliata* depends upon expectations that Plautus chooses to fulfill or foil, and the pleasure derives from encountering surprises within the formulaic structure. The chapters that follow show both the inadequacy of any crude application of the rigid template found in handbook summaries and the comic value of stretching or subverting any template.

First, Plautus stands apart from Menander and Terence in his rejection of the marriage plot so fundamental to their comic worlds. SHARON JAMES opens this section of the *Companion* with a catalog of Plautus's plays to demonstrate that the overwhelming majority avoid or downplay the marriage plot. In many plays, marriage is impossible because the woman is a *meretrix*, a courtesan or sex-worker, and the goal of the young male lover is continued access to the woman as *meretrix* rather than as wife. Plautus reveals no ideological investment in citizen society, no interest in fertility and the production of the next generation of citizens. Next, DAVID CHRISTENSON examines *Pseudolus* as an exemplary play (as both typical specimen and paragon) for identifying Plautus's Roman dramatic priorities. *Pseudolus* amplifies the machinations of the clever slave to supplant the usual Menandrian emphasis on romantic elements. Within the formulaic unity of the *palliata*, Pseudolus displays stunning agency and improvisatory skill; indeed, the creativity of servile Pseudolus mirrors the creativity of Plautus in breaking the fetters of a formulaic genre inherited from Greek "masters." COSTAS PANAYOTAKIS examines the *Amphitruo* and the *Menaechmi* and demonstrates how, building on comic incidents which arise out of the confusion involving identical twins or pairs of people who, for some reason, appear to be the mirror-image of one another, Plautus explores issues of unreliable vision, inaccurate knowledge, unstable personal identity, illicit sexual desire, and irresponsible social behavior.

Contrary to Frye's assertion that Plautus's New Comedy generates a new society, SHAWN O'BRYHIM argues that the resolutions in Plautus snap characters back to a kind of steady state, a return to prescriptive norms rather than to the promise of a new tomorrow. His analysis suggests that even the seemingly exceptional *Captivi* is quite typical, restoring the household to a long-lost *status quo ante bellum*. Yet while a Plautine play's plotted destination may be a return to the status quo, the path thither is frenetic and often topsy-turvy because the characters in control are not the patriarchal fathers, sons in their prime, or virile soldiers; instead, delightfully resourceful subaltern characters take charge. Plautus exhibits a fascination with slaves and women challenging and overthrowing patriarchal figureheads of authority. FERDINAND STÜRNER examines the appeal of arguably Plautus's most enduringly popular and flamboyant figure, what we commonly call the *servus callidus* or "tricky slave" in *Pseudolus*, *Mostellaria*, *Epidicus*, and *Bacchides*.

While the clever slave often may steal the spotlight, in several plays strong female characters upstage him or provide an alternative focal point. Women in Plautus were long neglected by scholarship; for example, George Duckworth's 36-page chapter on "Characters and Characterization" devoted only eight pages to female roles, lumping together *virgo*, *ancilla*, *matrona*, and *meretrix* (1952, pp. 253–261). Such conglomeration helped perpetuate a tendency to disregard functions and individuality, treating female characters as objects rather than subjects. But closer attention to how male actors in female roles perform their gender, class, and occupational identities (Dutsch 2008; Dutsch et al. 2015) recovers a Plautine dramaturgy of greater sophistication and vivacity. CATHERINE CONNORS explores three plays (*Bacchides*, *Truculentus*, *Menaechmi*) in which an independent *meretrix* wields autonomy and, from the male perspective, beckons with a perilously enticing descent into the underworld. BARBARA GOLD's analysis of *Casina* shows how the *matrona* Cleostrata, with the help of two other women, uses trickery to corral her husband, a creepy *senex amator*, and direct the action toward a socially acceptable ending. ANNE FELTOVICH tackles the archetypal male central characters of the miser in

Aulularia, the boastful soldier in *Miles Gloriosus*, and the greedy pimp in *Pseudolus* not as specimens of blocking characters, but as a function class of masculinity. In short, Plautus delights not in the stabilizing finality of romantic citizen marriage but in a temporary destabilizing of males abusing their (real or imagined) positions of authority.

The overthrow of persons misusing their authority generates laughter. But if comedy is a movement toward happiness, harmony, and reconciliation (Nelson 1990), then mockery and overthrow suggest satire and ridicule insufficient for, or even contrary to, integrative comedy. The *palliata* pursues various avenues for obtaining a comic ending, with deception and mockery as just two possible means. STAVROS FRANGOULIDES traces in *Rudens*, *Cistellaria*, and *Poenulus* how romance can find joyful resolution via competing plots that work with or against the larger arc of Fortuna. Yet grave doubts about divine Providence can emerge from *Amphitruo*, our lone extant example of mythological New Comedy, when Jupiter uses unseemly trickery to sleep with a married woman without her knowledge or consent. If we laugh at *Amphitruo*, we laugh awry at an anti-marriage plot, an adultery plot. As WALTER STOCKERT explains, Plautus challenges the most fundamental romantic template of the genre, coining the term *tragicomoedia* because *Amphitruo* defies the normative generic boundaries articulated by Aristotle. As Plautus revels in reorienting Menandrian generic norms, he embraces his position as anti-Aristotelian (Gonçalves 2015).

Turning from macro-issues of plot, character, and genre, what do comic micro-techniques reveal about Plautus's craft? Aulus Gellius claims that readers could identify the work of Plautus by verses that are *Plautinissimi* ("most Plautine," NA 3.3.4), even via a single line. PETER BARRIOS LECH gives us a glimpse of how that is possible through a close reading of similar passages in Plautus's *Curculio*, Turpilius's *Epiclernus*, and an unnamed Menandrian Greek script to indicate some hallmarks of Plautine style and Early Latin.

Words in the scripts allow only a glimpse of the extra-textual elements crucial to live performance. First, music was paramount. The scores have not survived, only the complex meters whose rules and patterns baffled scholars for centuries (Gratwick 1993; Questa 2007; Moore 2012). Since over half the lines in Plautus were delivered with musical accompaniment, we must recognize that rhythm and melody were essential to the theatrical experience, a point that TED GELLAR-GOAD hammers home through comparison to *Hamilton* and a hands-on exposition of the musical architecture in *Bacchides*. Second, metatheater. Although the term has acquired so many uses that some may deem it anathema (Rosenmeyer 2002), metatheater remains a fundamental category for discussions of Plautine dramaturgy. Metatheater can denote plays constructed from other plays, and thus mimetic of earlier theater rather than holding a mirror up to nature. As the *Trinummus* prologue announces, the *palliata* derives from Greek scripts refurbished with barbarous elements. Metatheater also includes non-illusory remarks that puncture the boundary between actor and audience or actor and character, indicators that characters have a self-awareness of their identity as theatrical entities. CHRISTOPHER BUNGARD reviews the varied approaches to metatheater in Plautus, especially *Pseudolus* and *Miles Gloriosus*, and suggests how his plays may hold up a mirror to life. If all the world's a stage, then the Romans, like us, and like the characters in Plautus, embodied and performed their scripted and improvised social identities daily.

Finally, using *Asinaria* and *Casina*, MARTIN DINTER tackles perhaps the most basic and difficult question for anyone studying Plautus: why do we, and did the Romans, laugh? While we can explicate verbal jokes – puns, bawdy, tongue-twisters, paratragedy,

etc. – and detect cues for physical humor, such as buffoonery or slapstick, we have lost the most important component in delivering a joke: delivery. Since laughter is both an internal, personal phenomenon and an external, social phenomenon, repeated schticks in Plautus must tell us something about what Roman audiences found funny in their society as sources of delight, ridicule, or anxiety, right?

Circumspection: The Interaction of Plautine Plays and Roman Society

So what can Plautine texts tell us about Roman social contexts? Plays are embedded within ambient society; they are popular entertainments reflecting, shaping, and embodying ideology. But three factors make the study of Plautus and Roman social history especially challenging. First, Plautus is not Aristophanes, whose plays abound with overt and precise socio-political commentary on his contemporary Athenian democracy and imperialism. Second, distinguishing the plays' Greek from Roman elements poses obstacles to using Plautine texts as documents of Roman social history. For example, one can diligently disentangle Greek versus Roman legal practices in a Plautine play, but each play primarily operates under idiosyncratic comic law, a fiction serving the dramatic logic that each individual plot requires. Third, the middle Republic's contextual evidence is comparatively limited. Since we have only minimal literary, epigraphic, and archeological evidence contemporary with Plautus, scholars confront a difficult path between swashbuckling synthesis and paralyzing analysis. Two landmarks from the later twentieth century may illustrate these polar extremes.

Erich Segal's frothy *Roman Laughter* (1968, 2nd ed. 1987) identified the essence of Plautine comedy as a festive, Saturnalian inversion of a Puritanical, "Catholic" Roman value system. Segal was a comparativist literary critic rather than a social historian, and his reconstruction of Roman attitudes mixed anachronistic theories of carnival with fanciful Freudian social psychology and reductionist theories of laughter. Those defects noted, Segal's model continues to stimulate the study of Plautus as a distinctly Roman poet. At the other extreme, Erich Gruen's sober historicism, by negating the conclusions of others more than offering positive interpretations, served to close rather than open avenues of exploration. After denying any specificity for topical allusions to triumphs, sumptuary laws, political struggles, and Philhellenism, Gruen's diagnosis offered only the blurry conclusions that "contemporaneity permeates the plays of Plautus" and "the playwright's posture is complex and elusive" and "all is grist to the comic mill" (1990, pp. 156–157). Again, Plautus is not Aristophanes: since Plautine topicality does not operate at such a granular level of names and dates, the historicist microscope needs a different lens.

The difficulty of avoiding myopic and hyperopic interpretations has deterred book-length historicist studies of Plautus, but we can celebrate two noteworthy exceptions that focus on ideology. David Konstan's *Roman Comedy* (1983) scrutinizes the serious social tensions and class conflicts encoded within the plays. Konstan's sensitivity to the intersection of literature and ideology provides a corrective lens for those who might overlook details peculiar to the ancient city-state by misconstruing them as transhistorical. Matthew Leigh's *Comedy and the Rise of Rome* (2004), which probes the plays as reflections of

Roman expansionist preoccupations, has arguably opened a new path for using Plautus as evidence of the *zeitgeist* during the transformative era of Roman Mediterranean imperialism. Even the smallest choices of interpretation matter for reconstruction of a *mentalité*: translating *Captivi* as “POWs” yields a richer and more precise historical resonance than the vague “Captives.”

Disentangling the Greek from the Roman in Plautus is sometimes impossible, as Greeks and Romans share many Mediterranean features; sometimes crucial, as an element may depend upon a culturally-specific practice or ideology; and sometimes pointless, as the plays exist neither in Greece nor Rome but in Plautinopolis (Adrian Gratwick’s nifty 1982 coinage for Plautus’s fictive universe). SOPHIA PAPAIOANNOU guides us through the complicated realm of Plautinopolis, suggesting how the temporary, make-believe stages can reflect permanent, real Roman absorption and assimilation of Greek literature and culture.

If constructing a physical stage also constructs a mental landscape, to what extent do Plautine theater and metatheater reflect and authorize Roman imperialism? PAUL BURTON’s analysis of warfare and imperialism in and around Plautus shows conclusively that the plays resonate with both precise echoes of contemporary military discourse and general areas of anxieties over intercultural contacts. The Greeks were not the only cultural competitor in the Mediterranean, for the Carthaginians offered a different Other against which the Romans could define themselves. The Carthaginians posed a continual and dire threat to Rome, especially in the war with Hannibal (218–201). SETH JEPPESEN examines religious practices in *Poenulus*, staged shortly after the Hannibalic War. As modern religious studies focus on the sociology of practices rather than theology of beliefs, the chapter views religious ritual as performance or paratheatrical activity. Should one understand a Carthaginian character engaging in Roman ritual as parody or piety? A dramatic necessary for even the Punic inhabitants of Plautinopolis or a marker of real and aggressive cultural assimilation?

Great progress in historicizing Plautus explores the experiences of subaltern characters on stage, especially women and slaves, as embodiments of women and slaves in Roman society. SERENA WITZKE surveys the Plautine corpus to illustrate how individual characters perform their social roles in terms of gender and class. Plautus portrays a full menu of sexual attractions and agents – male, female, slave, free, old, young – pursuing goals beyond heteronormative citizen marriage. Our willingness to move beyond the prim category of romance and look frankly at uncomfortable issues, such as rape and the lives of sex laborers, has yet again provided a salutary counterbalance or corrective to the primacy of the marriage plot.

Uncomfortable, too, are those scenes depicting objectification of humans as slaves. Since slavery was a central feature of Roman society and Plautine plays, particularly in an era when the spoils of imperialism included a massive influx of foreign chattel slaves, the *Companion* devotes multiple chapters to slavery. AMY RICHLIN surveys the entire corpus to demonstrate how the pervasive experience of slavery functions as the core condition informing all aspects of Plautine theater. Her chapter outlines the wide range of servile roles, names, appearances, and behaviors to help contextualize what we should – and should not – take for granted in Roman comedy. ROBERTA STEWART begins with the ideas that slavery is both a tangible relationship between humans (master and slave) and

an intangible ideology that produces, and is transmitted by, public discourse. From there, she adduces the modern lenses of “labor” and “commodification” to examine the texts, revealing, for example, that Plautus and Cato are mutually illuminating and reinforcing rather than antagonists. As noted earlier, Ferdinand Stürner’s chapter on the slave in charge examines the slave as a character operating within the genre’s plot structures. Taken together, these chapters offer readers an essential overview (Richlin), a study of ideology within particular scenes (Stewart), and four famous case studies (Stürner). Since we must not reify a monolithic Roman audience with a singular response to something we find ridiculous, strange, or terrifying, the *Companion* welcomes the three differing strategies and conclusions to indicate the complexity of a phenomenon that admits of no single, simple solution. Multivalent jokes must have landed differently among the different segments of the Roman audience (slaves and their owners, men and women, fathers and daughters) by touching different fantasies and anxieties, and they continue to land differently today.

We should add that since new plays respond both to ambient society and to the conventions established by earlier plays, metatheatrical and historicizing interpretations can and must offer complementary rather than competing lenses. For example, we know that when Plautus’s clever slave Chrysalus in *Bacchides* brags of stealing larger sums than other New Comic slaves, “those Parmenos and Syruses” (649–650), he metatheatrically brags of surpassing the corresponding slave character named Syros in Menander’s *Dis Exapaton*. Chrysalus invokes the sack of Troy not only to praise himself and Plautine drama but also to remind the audience of recent Roman conquests, such as the defeat of King Antiochus in the Syrian War of 192–188 (Jeppesen 2016). Thus, his metatheatrical allusion to “Syrians” acquires an additional historicizing interpretation (cf. Livy 36.17, where the Roman consul tells his troops: “here are Syrians and Asiatic Greeks, the vilest nation of men and born for slavery”). In short, any passage “about” slavery or warfare or sexuality in Plautus both embodies Roman realities or ideologies *and* embeds them within the fictions of Greek New Comedy, Atellan farce, and the *palliata*.

Prospection: The Transmission and Reception of Plautus

What was Plautus’s legacy in Rome and thereafter? It is difficult to map the *palliata* after Plautus because we must try to orient ourselves based upon only two solid landmarks: the 20 scripts of Plautus and the 6 of Terence from a generation later. GESINE MANUWALD surveys the major figures in the *palliata* to the extent that fragmentary quotations permit conjectures. One reconstruction of the *palliata*’s history proposes a progression from Plautus to Terence (c.185–159), with Caecilius Statius (c.220–168) in between both chronologically and stylistically. Another reconstruction (Wright 1974) fingers Terence as an outlier, with all other authors of the *palliata* embracing a stylistic unity. Ultimately, our view of the *palliata*’s evolution depends upon the predilections of the later ancient scholars who selectively excerpted the material. We stand on more solid ground identifying traces of Plautus in other extant literature – especially in genres with an eye toward performance – where we can detect rhetorical techniques to manipulate a crowd that recall, if

not derive from, Plautine comedy. EMILIA BARBIERO reveals how the “synergy between comic stage and rostra” is more vibrant than previously thought. Plautus shows awareness of Graeco-Roman oratorical and rhetorical theory, and popular Roman orators – including Cato – seem to appropriate techniques of persuasion from the *palliata*.

Scripts originate as a technology of theater-makers to serve as a foundation for staging a play, a transcript of a play already staged, and a transmitter for restaging a play. Subsequently scripts can come to serve readers as well as theater-makers. These multiple functions of a script lead to additions, deletions, doublets, and substitutions in transmission that create a textual history far more fluid and complicated than the works of an historian such as Livy. ROLANDO FERRI traces the essentials for the textual transmission on which all subsequent tradition and reception depends. The huge gaps between Plautus’s own productions, the late Republican and early Imperial editions, and our earliest extant manuscript in the fifth century make any reconstruction of a hypothetical “fair copy” impossible, rendering quixotic any effort to detect interpolations and recover an original Plautine text. While the striking absence of paratextual features such as cues, director’s notes, illustrations, and musical scores effectively reclassified the plays as texts to be read rather than performed, the absence perhaps allowed later performers greater freedom to modify the scripts.

After interest in Plautus waned during the Middle Ages (ANTONY AUGOUSTAKIS summarizes two significant adaptations of *Aulularia*), his comedy returned to the public stage with a bang in 1486 in the performance of a vernacular version (*vortit barbare!*) of *Menaechmi* in Ferrara. GIANNI GUASTELLO shows how Italian Renaissance productions renovated Plautus with translations into *terza rima*, an absence of masks, and new songs. The renewed interest in Plautus cross-fertilized other genres, providing crucial comic DNA to subsequent early modern and modern drama. GEORGE FREDRIC FRANKO argues that while Plautus may have left minimal traces in early modern English grammar-school curricula, he had maximal impact upon the professional playwrights working in purpose-built London theaters. Plautine dramatic techniques, especially direct audience contact and emphasis upon scenes as discrete compositional units, inform all Shakespearean drama.

Tracing the reception of Plautine comedy in the history of European theater in Germany, France, and elsewhere, to say nothing of the world, would require too many chapters. We jump, therefore, to the later twentieth century, for which RODRIGO TADEU GONÇALVES examines something familiar – the Broadway smash *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* – and something peculiar – the Spanish playwright Alfonso Sastre’s renovation of *Amphitruo*. Plautus offers a heroic ancestor to those postmodern artists and theorists fascinated by radical forms of renovation of the canon, especially with his metatheatrical techniques. A postmodernist aesthetic can enable us to appreciate more keenly some of Plautus’s dramatic priorities; for example, we can recognize the aggressively positive value of “barbarization” in *Plautus vortit barbare* rather than dismissing the phrase under the tepid label of “irony.”

Outside of classicists, most people who read Plautus do so in translations, which range from the scrupulously faithful to the flamboyantly free. Just as the wall that long separated scholars from performers has begun to fall, so too the wall between scholars and translators. As Dante Gabriel Rossetti observed, translation “perhaps remains the most direct

form of commentary,” and thus many eminent classicists now embrace translation as a form of outreach and criticism. JAMES TATUM illustrates the virtues of having a range of English translations available for *Bacchides*, *Amphitruo*, and *Poenulus*. His essay closes our *Companion* with consideration of Louis Zukofsky’s *A – 21*, a barbarization of *Rudens* whose five-word-per-line structure creates a kind of palimpsest, an invitation to see and hear Zukofsky and Plautus simultaneously, and thereby refresh our acquaintance with the process and productions of *Plautus Barbarus*.

NOTE

- 1 All Latin quotations of Plautus taken from the Loeb edition of Wolfgang de Melo, unless noted otherwise. Translations are by the individual contributors, unless noted otherwise.

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CHAPTER ONE

The State of Roman Theater c. 200 BCE

Timothy J. Moore

To understand the works of any playwright, we should know the theatrical context in which those works were first performed. Playwrights respond to the theater they know, and what spectators have experienced elsewhere profoundly affects the expectations they bring when they watch a play. This context is especially important in the case of Plautus, whose plays are adaptations of Greek comedies. Because his Greek originals are lost, one of the key questions of Plautine scholarship has been the extent to which he changed those comedies as he adapted them, especially how in doing so he responded to the theatrical traditions he knew at Rome (see Chapter 2). Yet we also have no surviving plays written by Plautus's predecessors or contemporaries at Rome, so a reconstruction of the theatrical world he and his audience knew presents many challenges. Much of what follows in this chapter, therefore, will involve probabilities rather than certainties.

Sources

We rely on several kinds of sources for our information on Roman theater in the late third and early second centuries (all ancient dates BCE unless noted). Plautus's plays themselves include explicit and implicit references to the theater of his day; and while the plays of Plautus's contemporaries have been lost, a number of fragments (quotations from those plays by later authors) survive. We can learn about the spaces where some of Plautus's plays were performed by examining remains of temples, on the steps of which audience members sat for some performances (Goldberg 1998; see Chapter 3 in this volume). Some Roman objects from Plautus's day and earlier may show theatrical scenes, and archaeological evidence from elsewhere in Italy, including performances painted in Etruscan

tombs and portrayals of theatrical scenes on vases from southern Italy, provide analogies and signs of possible influence.

Later Roman authors, ranging from Plautus's successor Terence (died 159) to grammarians of late antiquity such as Donatus and Diomedes, provide most of our evidence. The most important among these texts are passages in several authors that describe the origins of Roman theater. All these accounts probably go back to one or more now-lost works on theater by the great scholar Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27). The fullest version of Varro's account is a digression (7.2.3–12) by the historian Livy (59 or 54 BCE–12 or 17 CE), who wrote a history of Rome from its beginnings to his own day. Livy reports the following steps in the development of Roman theater:

1. Hoping to appease the gods in response to a plague in 364, Roman leaders introduced to their religious games (*ludi*) “dancers, summoned from Etruria,” who “performed quite refined dances in the Etruscan manner, without singing or imitating any specific action.” They were accompanied by a *tibicen*, who played the *tibia*, a woodwind instrument consisting of two pipes with double reeds (see Chapter 17, pp. 252–253).
2. Roman youth imitated these dancers, “at the same time hurling insults at each other with rude verses; and their motions were in agreement with their voices.”
3. Professional actors abandoned the rude verses of the Roman youth and introduced more refined versions of this combination of song and dance, which were called *saturae*.
4. Some time later, Livius Andronicus brought plays with plots to Rome.
5. Because he lost his voice performing in his own plays, Livius Andronicus introduced a new practice, in which actors vocalized only the spoken parts of the drama. Instead of singing the musical parts, they gestured silently while someone else sang to the accompaniment of the *tibia*. Not having to sing themselves, the actors could gesture more energetically.
6. The youths left these more sophisticated performances to professional actors, “and they themselves began to toss back and forth jokes intermingled with verses, just as they had done in the old days.” These ruder performances became associated with *exodia* (short performances after regular plays) and with the *fabula Atellana*, an Oscan performance genre imported into Rome.

We must use Varro's account of Roman theater's origins, and especially Livy's version of it, with extreme caution. It is unknown what sources Varro had available to him, and he may have filled gaps in those sources with speculation based on accounts by Aristotle and others on the origins of Greek theater. Further suspicion of Livy's account arises from the historian's personal bias against theater and what appears to be his determination to minimize Greek influences. Not surprisingly, therefore, Livy's digression is one of the most controversial passages in Latin literature, and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to evaluate its truthfulness regarding how Roman theater began (see Oakley 1998 for a full discussion). Because the steps of Livy's account are likely to reflect aspects of theatrical practice in his own and/or earlier times, however, they will provide a good starting point for much of what follows.

A Well-Established and Cosmopolitan Tradition

Livy and the other sources available to us suggest that by Plautus's day Rome had known theater for many decades. Plautus's career probably started in the last years of the third century, over 150 years after Livy's Etruscan dancers joined the Roman *ludi* (step 1). Other sources suggest that the "plays with a plot" introduced by Livius Andronicus (step 4) were adaptations of Greek tragedies and comedies, and that Livius offered the first such play at a festival in 240, 30 or so years before Plautus began producing plays.

Our sources further suggest that Plautus's audience had a large number of opportunities to see plays. Plays were performed at several major annual *ludi* (see Chapter 21, pp. 319–320). The number of days at those *ludi* dedicated to theater increased in the years after 240, reaching about nine days a year by about 200, and still more by the time Plautus died in 184. Plays were also performed at festivals held to mark special occasions such as funerals and the dedication of temples. Terence's *Hecyra*, for example, was offered for performance first at a major annual festival (the *ludi Megalenses*) and then at funeral games.

There is no reason to doubt Livy's association of Rome's first theater with Etruscans. Rome was subject to the Etruscans early in its history, and dance performances play a conspicuous role on many frescoes adorning Etruscan tombs. Etruscan influence may have gone further than dance. Though Livy's Etruscan dancers use no words or mimesis, some figures on the frescoes are masked and may be in performances with characters and a plot. Several Latin terms for elements of theater, including *histrion* (actor), *ludius* (actor or dancer) and *persona* (mask), seem to have come to Latin via Etruscan. Considerable influence on Roman theater from other peoples of Italy is also very likely. Livy's *Atellana* (step 6) was an invention of Oscan speakers, Italic peoples who inhabited Campania and surrounding regions. Archeological evidence records a lively tradition of theater in Campania and areas around it from at least the fourth century. Of the early Roman playwrights, three either came from Campania (Naevius) or are known to have spoken Oscan (Ennius, Pacuvius). We even have evidence for performances in Rome of dramas in the Oscan language as late as the first century (e.g. Cic. *Fam.* 7.1.3).

Some modern scholars, most notably T.P. Wiseman in a long series of publications, have argued that Roman theater in the mid-Republic was older, more widespread, and more cosmopolitan than our ancient sources suggest. There were probably theatrical performances outside of festivals – casual street theater, stagings in private homes, and plays at smaller festivals – of which the literary tradition has no record, and such performances may well predate the official performances recorded by ancient sources. Most importantly, Wiseman and others have observed that the complete absence of Greek elements from Livy's account is an absurdity, an extreme version of a tendency of many Roman sources to assume that Rome was largely isolated from Greek culture until the second century. We now know that from a very early date – centuries before Plautus – Rome was part of a multi-state Italian community in which ideas and cultural forms, including theater, circulated freely. From its earliest days, Rome was subject to Greek influence, both indirectly through the mediation of the Etruscans and other Italic peoples, and through direct contact with the Greek cities of southern Italy. Roman theater was therefore more "Greek" from its beginning than the ancient literary sources would have us believe.

Forms

The grammarians of late antiquity divided the forms of Roman theater into the following genres, with some variations:

1. *Fabulae Atellanae*, named after the Campanian city of Atella.
2. Mime, with a name related to the Greek word *mimesis*, or imitation.
3. *Fabulae palliatae*: comedies set in Greece, named after the *pallium*, a Greek cloak worn by its actors.
4. *Fabulae togatae*: comedies set in Italian cities, named after the toga, a garment associated with Romans.
5. *Fabulae crepidatae*: tragedies with plots drawn from mythology, named after the *crepida*, a type of shoe worn by actors performing in these plays.
6. *Fabulae praetextae*: plays with plots drawn from Roman history, named after the *toga praetexta*, a toga with a purple border worn by Roman magistrates.

Wiseman has argued that Roman spectators watched many plays that transcended the generic boundaries imposed on the tradition by later Roman scholars. At the core of his approach is a proposal that many Roman legends contain dramatic elements because they were originally presented as theater. To cite just one among many examples, Wiseman notes what appears to be a reference in Varro to a play associated with a minor festival called the *Nonae Caprotinae* (*Ling.* 6.18). When the Latins demanded the Romans' daughters in marriage and the Romans did not have the means to resist, Roman slave girls disguised themselves as the daughters, slept with the Latins, and then helped the Roman army surprise and defeat them. This play and others like it, Wiseman hypothesizes, combined patriotic themes with ribald sexual dances in a manner that transcended any of the genres described in our literary sources (1998, pp. 8–11; 2004, pp. 171–174).

Whether or not the theater of Plautus's Rome included genre-defying performances such as those hypothesized by Wiseman, we can identify in it a wide variety of theatrical forms. Four different but overlapping types of performance stand out: dance to the *tibia*, improvisational farce, comedy, and tragedy.

Dance to the Tibia

At the heart of Livy's account of the origins of Roman theater is dance, accompanied by the *tibia*. Whether or not we accept Livy's progression of ever more elaborate dance forms, his narrative combines with other evidence to suggest that both before and during Plautus's time, Roman audiences watched a great deal of dance, and indeed that dance to the *tibia* was viewed as the core element of Roman theatrical *ludi* (cf. Dupont 1993; Habinek 2005, pp. 110–111). Rome's most important religious festival, the *ludi Romani*, began with processions including several groups of dancers (Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 7.72.5–12; cf. Chapter 21, p. 321). Later authors tell a story that in 212 a report came during the *ludi* that an enemy army was approaching Rome, and all left the theater to ward off the enemy. Fearing impiety at the interruption of a religious festival, the Romans were relieved to see that during the commotion an old performer named Pomponius had not stopped dancing

to the accompaniment of a *tibicen* (Serv. *ad Aen.* 8.110). The story gave rise to a proverb: *salva res est, saltat senex* (“the state is safe, the old man is dancing”). It implies that the central element necessary for theatrical performance was dance accompanied by the *tibia*.

According to the late antique author Cassiodorus, when the censors temporarily outlawed theatrical performance in 115, they exempted the *Latinum tibicinem cum cantore et ludum talarium* (“the Latin *tibicen* with a singer and the *ludus talarium*,” *Chronica* ad 639 a.u.c.). The *ludus talarium* is mysterious, but its most likely explanation is that just as *Latinus tibicen cum cantore* is a singer accompanied by the *tibicen*, *ludus talarium* is someone dancing to the *tibia* (Jory 1995). Singing and dancing to the *tibicen* were spared the wrath of the censors, as they were seen as the key traditional elements of Roman theatrical *ludi*. In Plautus’s *Curculio*, when the young lover Phaedromus wants the bolts of his lover’s door to leap up for him, he begs them: *fite causa mea ludii barbari*, “for my sake become barbarian dancers” (150). *Barbari* means “Roman” in Plautus, a self-deprecating joke based on the characters’ alleged Greekness. Phaedromus thus associates leaping dancers specifically with Roman performers (cf. *Aul.* 626–627).

Though dance to the *tibicen* may have been seen as an especially Roman practice, it is almost certain that from a very early date the Roman tradition of festive dance mingled with traditions of dance entertainment that pervaded the Hellenistic world. Various types of solo dancers apparently traveled between Hellenistic cities. Among the names given to these dancers were *kinaidos* (“cinaedic dancer”) and *ionikos* (“Ionian dancer”). Plautine characters doing lewd dances compare themselves to *cinaedi* and *ionici*, suggesting that their Roman audiences would be familiar with these Hellenistic traditions of lascivious solo dance (*Pers.* 809; *Pseud.* 1274b; *Stich.* 769). Two dancers in Plautus’s *Persa* even compare themselves to two specific dancers, Hegea and Diodorus (824–826). Hegea and Diodorus were probably traveling dancers of the Hellenistic world who included Rome on their tours.

Given the ephemeral nature of dance, it is not surprising that our evidence for it in mid-Republican Rome is thin, and that determining what specific forms it took is difficult. Livy’s account may give us some clues. The dance of Livy’s original Etruscan dancers, without any vocalization or imitation (step 1), may well correspond to a type of dance still seen in Plautus’s day (the *ludus talarium*?). The dances of Livy’s youths, with their rude verses and corresponding movements (step 2), may be a ribald dance form still performed in the late third century. We know *saturae* as a literary form, but Varro may have known of a more refined form of dance-with-words that matches Livy’s description (step 3). It seems highly unlikely that the extant or fragmentary texts of Roman scripted drama were presented as Livy says Livius Andronicus performed after he lost his voice, miming plays’ musical parts while someone else sang (step 5). But it is also unlikely that the practice is a figure of Varro or Livy’s imagination. It most likely reflects a performance practice otherwise unrecorded, which was partly dialogue spoken by actors and partly an ancestor of pantomime (in pantomime a dancer danced silently while instruments played and a chorus sang; cf. Jory 1981).

Improvisatory Farce

At two steps in his history of Roman theater, Livy describes an infusion of improvised verses into the dance tradition. First, the Roman youth combined imitation of the Etruscan dancers with rude verses, which Livy associates with apotropaic insults chanted at Roman

weddings called fescennine verses (step 2). Later the youths again improvised, creating the form that developed into *exodia* and combined with Atellan plays (step 6). Again, the value of Livy's account for the origins of Roman theater is subject to doubt. But combined with other evidence the passage suggests that mixed in with the tradition of dance was a long tradition of improvisational verbal performance. Simple farcical plots probably joined the banter Livy describes at a very early date. As is the case with dance forms, types of improvisational farce probably existed for which no literary evidence survives. Two such forms, however, became literary genres in the late Republic and were thus included in later authors' lists of theatrical genres: the *fabula Atellana* and the mime.

Fabulae Atellanae appear to have been short farcical skits, which could serve as afterpieces after longer plays. The exact date at which they became a part of Roman entertainment is not known, but they were almost certainly a feature of Roman theater by Plautus's day. In the first century, several authors, most notably Pomponius and Novius, began to write scripts for *Atellanae*, of which some fragments and a number of titles survive. The exact degree to which these plays resembled their preliterate ancestors is not clear; but assuming at least some continuity, we can combine the fragments with references in other authors to make some educated guesses about what *Atellanae* were like in Plautus's day.

At the core of the literary *Atellana*, and presumably of its unscripted predecessor as well, were four stock characters. Maccus was a clown, Bucco a braggart, Pappus a foolish old man, Dossennus a trickster and/or a glutton. These characters are strikingly similar to some of the recurring characters of the *commedia dell'arte* of Renaissance and later Italy. Some have even proposed a continuing folk tradition to explain these similarities (Monaghan 2015). Whether or not we can assume such hidden continuities, we can be confident that the *Atellana*, like the *commedia dell'arte*, consisted of skits in which these characters found themselves in various comic situations. Thus we find titles of *Atellanae* such as *Maccus Miles* (*Maccus the Soldier*), *Bucco Adoptatus* (*Bucco Adopted*), *Sponsa Pappi* (*Pappus's Bride*), and *Duo Dossenni* (*Two Dossennuses*). Other titles suggest that the genre may have had a special interest in trades (e.g. *Agricola* [*The Farmer*], *Fullones* [*The Fullers*], *Medicus* [*The Doctor*]) and in marriage (e.g. *Dotata* [*The Woman with a Dowry*], *Nuptiae* [*The Wedding*]). The skits probably included a good deal of verbal dueling, corresponding to the rude verses of Livy's youths (steps 2 and 6), which may in turn have inspired scenes of competing insults found in Plautus (e.g. *Pseud.* 357–368, *Rud.* 494–558).

Livy distinguishes performers in *fabulae Atellanae* from actors in other genres. The youths who took up the *Atellanae*, he claims, “held on to them and did not allow them to be polluted by the professional actors. For this reason the policy has remained that actors in Atellan plays are not removed from their tribes [i.e. they do not lose their citizenship status], and they can serve in the army as if they had no part in theatrical performance” (7.2.12). Another source reports that actors in *fabulae Atellanae*, unlike other performers, were not forced to remove their masks when they finished performing. They could thus conceal their identity and maintain their dignity (Festus 238 L). Other evidence suggests that at a later date, at least, actors in *Atellanae* were not differentiated from those in other genres, and it is not clear whether we should envision for Plautus's day performances of *Atellanae* by amateurs.

While the extent to which Plautus was influenced by *fabulae Atellanae* is controversial, Plautus almost certainly shows an awareness of this tradition. In Plautus's *Bacchides*, the

old man Nicobulus rebukes himself as a *bucco* (1088). Another Plautine character compares himself to *Manducus*, who may also have been a character of *Atellana* (*Rud.* 535). Plautus's own middle name, Maccus, may be a name he created for himself or received because of experience performing that role in *fabulae Atellanae* (Gratwick 1973).

Mime, a Greek import, also began as an improvisatory tradition but became a literary genre in the first century. Mime performances at Rome date from the late third century at the latest. The old dancer Pomponius, who allegedly saved the games in 212, is described as a *planipes*. *Planipes*, meaning "flat-footed," was used as a generic identifier of mime actors, who performed barefoot.

Mimes were not performed as "mime" in our sense of silent imitation, but were, like *Atellanae*, spoken or sung skits with a highly farcical, improvisatory nature and simple plots centered on everyday life. Like *Atellanae*, mimes probably had recurring stock characters, though we do not have for mime the same set list of characters we have for *Atellanae*. By the late Republic mime seems to have replaced the *Atellana* as the primary source of afterpieces presented after longer dramatic performances, and by the time of the Empire it had become, along with its more musical cousin pantomime, the dominant theatrical form on the Roman stage.

At least in its later manifestations, mime differed from the *Atellana*, and indeed from all other Roman theatrical forms, in important ways. Mimes were performed without masks, and, uniquely, by both male and female performers. Mime was the lowliest of the ancient performance genres. Naked dancing appears to have been a regular occurrence at mime performances, and a standard plot was the so-called "adultery mime," in which an adulterer was hidden by a wayward wife from her returning husband, with farcical results. The genre also allowed a wide range of other plot types, including love stories similar to those of comedy, and mythological burlesques. Visual evidence and some remains of mimes preserved on papyrus suggest that musical elements, including dance, the *tibia*, and various percussion instruments, played an important role. The surviving fragments of Laberius and Publilius Syrus, who wrote mimes in the first century, are dominated by pithy moral sayings called *sententiae*. This dominance is a product of the interests of excerptors, but the existence of so many *sententiae* nevertheless suggests that at least in its later literary form this traditionally lewd and farcical genre also had time for moralizing. We have evidence from the late Republic and Empire of mime performers making topical, sometimes caustic, political allusions from the stage. Such topicality may have been a feature of mime's preliterate form as well.

As with the *Atellana*, Plautus's name may reflect experience with mime. The name "Plautus" itself, which means "flat-foot," is possibly a made-up name reflecting Plautus's own experience as a *planipes* who performed in mimes (Gratwick 1973).

Scripted Drama

Some 30 years after Plautus's death, a theatrical troupe expanded the prologue of his *Casina* for a revival performance. Among their additions was a statement that when *Casina* was first performed in the early second century, "there was a flowering of poets" (*ea tempestate flos poetarum fuit*, 18). This claim joins other evidence in suggesting that Plautus's audiences had the opportunity to see lots of scripted drama, including comedies

like Plautus's, known as *fabulae palliatae*. Two titles survive of *palliatae* by Livius Andronicus, and about 33 by Gnaeus Naevius, who probably began writing comedies about the same time as Livius Andronicus. Of Quintus Ennius, who would go on to become the greatest Latin author of the second century, two comic titles survive, one or both of which may have been written early in Ennius's career, and therefore during Plautus's lifetime. Forty-two titles survive of comedies by Caecilius Statius, whom one ancient critic considered the best Roman comic author. Though he survived Plautus by some years, Plautus's audiences probably knew Caecilius's earliest plays as well. Each of these playwrights may have written more comedies whose titles have not survived; and to these names famous in antiquity we can add several more comic playwrights of whom we have only a few titles and fragments, and others whose names alone have survived. There were probably more, of whom all trace has been lost. Some 53 titles have come down to us attributed to Plautus. Although Varro felt confident that just 21 of them were actually by Plautus, a scholar in the second century CE reports that in his day 130 plays were in circulation attributed to Plautus (Gell. NA 3.3.11). Some of these plays, perhaps, were actually by Plautus, and others were no doubt by later imitators. But some were probably by other authors of Plautus's day whose very names have been lost.

There were no doubt variations between these playwrights. Some evidence, for example, suggests that Naevius may have been more willing than his contemporaries to engage with politics in his plays (but see Gruen 1990, pp. 92–106). All in all, though, the remains of the *fabula palliata* suggest that the genre was remarkably uniform, and that Plautus's audience came to his plays with a well-developed set of generic expectations. As far as we can tell, all *palliatae* were adaptations of Greek comedies. They were set in the Greek world; but Plautus's contemporaries, like Plautus himself, did not hesitate to introduce incongruous elements of Roman life into their plots. Thus we find characters in Naevius referring to cities near Rome (*Ariolus* 23 Warmington). The plots of *palliatae*, with a few exceptions like Plautus's *Captivi*, had at their core a young man who gains access to a woman he loves in the course of the play.

The fragments also suggest that the comedies of Plautus's contemporaries were inhabited by the same stock characters we find in the Plautine corpus (see Chapter 8): clever slaves and prostitutes, love-struck young men, stern fathers who find themselves duped, wives who oppose their husbands, parasites, braggart soldiers. Many of the comic themes we find in Plautus, such as food and drunkenness, show up in the fragments as well. There also appears to be a remarkable similarity in the verbal style of all the early writers of *palliatae*: many fragments demonstrate the same kind of verbal exuberance we find in Plautus, including long comic lists, anaphora and alliteration, asyndeton, incongruous comparison and identifications, and farcical jokes (Wright 1974).

Palliatae were profoundly musical, far more so than their Greek models. Though they removed the choruses who had provided interludes in Greek comedies, the Roman comic playwrights had their actors perform to musical accompaniment far more often than their Greek predecessors had. The two dominant meters in the comic fragments of Livius Andronicus, Naevius, Ennius, and Caecilius, as in Plautus, are the iambic senarius, which we know from various sources was almost always spoken without accompaniment, and the trochaic septenarius, which was sung or chanted to the accompaniment of the *tibia*. There are hints as well in the other comic playwrights of some of the more complex meters for which Plautus was famous (see Chapter 17).

It is possible that a second form of scripted comic drama, known by later Roman authors as the *fabula togata*, also developed during Plautus's lifetime. The earliest known author of this genre, Titinius, probably produced his first play before Terence's first play appeared in 166 (Walsh 2011, pp. 126–138). As we can date the playwright with no greater precision, his floruit may have been after Plautus died, or the careers of the two playwrights may have overlapped. From the few surviving fragments of Titinius's plays, the similarly scanty fragments of later writers of *togatae* (especially L. Afranius [late second century] and T. Quinctius Atta [early first century]), and accounts of the genre in later authors, we learn that *fabulae togatae* were set not in Greece, but in towns around Rome. They appear, like *palliatae*, to have had plots centered on love; but they were probably not direct adaptations of Greek comedies. The fragments and other evidence suggest that *togatae* had a greater interest than *palliatae* did in family relationships – we hear a good deal about marriages and dowries, for example – and that, as in the literary *Atellana*, various kinds of rather mundane professions played an important role. There is some evidence that the overturning of social mores that played such an important part in *palliatae* was toned down in *togatae*. A regular feature of *palliatae* is the deception of masters by their slaves (see Chapter 9). While there is also evidence for deception plays among *togatae*, Donatus reports that in *togatae* slaves were in general not cleverer than their masters (ad *Eun.* 57).

If in fact Titinius's career overlapped with Plautus's, Plautus's theatrical milieu becomes more complex. Such an early date for Titinius would mean that at least in the last years of Plautus's career his audiences would be accustomed to some bold experimentation in scripted comedy, even as the plots, characters, and style of *palliatae* generally followed predictable patterns. At least for now that question must remain open.

Plautus's audience was also very familiar with mythological tragedies, later called *fabulae crepidatae*. From this genre we have about 8 titles attributed to Livius Andronicus, 6 to Naevius, and 20 to Ennius. Ennius's nephew Marcus Pacuvius, who also wrote tragedies, was born in 220, so the earliest of his tragedies may also date from Plautus's lifetime (about 13 titles survive). As is the case with *palliatae*, each of these authors may have written more tragedies whose titles have not survived, and there were probably other writers of tragedy in Plautus's day who have left us no titles or fragments. A character in Plautus's *Rudens* compares a storm to the one in the *Alcumena* of Euripides (86). He refers presumably to an adaptation of Euripides's *Alcmene* that Plautus's audience would have recently seen. There is no *Alcumena*, however, in the extant titles of Livius, Naevius, Ennius, or Pacuvius.

Crepidatae, like *palliatae*, were adaptations of Greek plays. In choosing which Greek tragedies to adapt, the Roman tragic playwrights appear to have had a decided preference for the “classics” of the fifth century: Aeschylus, Sophocles, and especially Euripides. Sometimes the Roman tragedians followed their Greek predecessors quite closely. Some surviving passages of Ennius's *Medea* are nearly direct translations from Euripides's *Medea*. Like the authors of *palliatae*, however, the Roman tragic playwrights did not hold to a standard of unswerving fidelity to their Greek originals. The fragments suggest that among the changes they made was an intensification of melodramatic elements. The title character of Ennius's *Andromacha* sings an elaborate lamentation that expands upon her laments in Euripides's *Andromache* (F 23 Manuwald). The tragedians were also fond

of Roman-style moralizing and political vocabulary, as when, in Naevius's *Trojan Horse*, Hector tells Priam, "I am happy that I am praised by you, father, a man who has himself been praised" (F 14 Schauer).

Mercury, delivering the prologue of Plautus's *Amphitruo*, says that the play about to begin is a tragedy. Alleging that that statement brings frowns from his audience, he says that he will make the play a comedy using the same verses (*isdem vorsibus*, 55). Mercury's *isdem vorsibus* is an exaggeration, but not an absurdity. As in Greece, Roman tragedies have more "serious" plots than comedies, and their characters are of higher status. In other respects, however, the difference between comedy and tragedy in Republican Rome is much less than that between tragedy and comedy in fifth-century Athens. Unlike in Athens, where the same author virtually never wrote both tragedies and comedies, Livius, Naevius, and Ennius all wrote both *crepidatae* and *palliatae*.

Roman tragic language, not surprisingly, tends to be more bombastic than Plautus's (except when Plautus himself is parodying tragedy), but in many respects the styles of comedy and tragedy were remarkably similar in the Roman Republic. Both comic and tragic playwrights of Plautus's day had a fondness for elaborate language, which abounds in such features as alliteration, word play, and long lists. What exactly happened to Greek tragic choruses in the hands of their Roman adaptors is not clear, but it is reasonably certain that they played a less significant role, while actors sang much more than they did in the Greek originals. Tragedy thus shared with comedy the same basic musical structure, in which spoken passages in iambic senarii alternated with passages in other meters chanted or sung to the *tibia*. Several tragic fragments also hint at the kind of metrical variety Plautus is known for, and it has been suggested that the lyric passages of Ennius, Naevius, and other tragedians may have been the inspiration for some of Plautus's musical extravaganzas (Fraenkel 2007, pp. 219–251). This close relationship between tragedy and comedy meant that Plautus could respond to his sister genre easily and fluidly, in passages ranging from hilarious parody to those where language reminiscent of tragedy increases the emotional power of sentimental scenes (see Chapter 14).

Fabulae praetextae had plots drawn from Roman history, sometimes from the mythical past, and sometimes from more recent events (compare Aeschylus's *Persians*). Our first known *fabulae praetextae* are two plays by Naevius: *The Wolf* or *Romulus*, drawn from the life of Rome's legendary founder, and *Clastidium*, which recounted events surrounding a Roman victory in 222. We also have titles of two *praetextae* by Ennius (*The Sabine Women*, about another event from Rome's foundation legend, and *Ambracia*, about a successful Roman siege in 189), and a few by later authors. Their meager remains suggest that in style and structure *fabulae praetextae* were similar to *fabulae crepidatae*. In a long fragment from a *praetexta* of the later playwright Accius (170 -c. 84), for example, characters move between unaccompanied iambic senarii and accompanied trochaic septenarii in identical ways to what happens in *crepidatae* and the plays of Plautus (651–672 Dangel 2002). The existence of the *praetexta* indicates the degree to which Roman audiences and playwrights in Plautus's day were willing to move beyond the range offered them by Greek drama, whether or not we follow Wiseman in assuming that mid-Republican Rome featured types of theater that go well beyond those explicitly described in our sources.

Conclusion

The fleeting glimpses we are offered into what happened on the Roman stage of Plautus's day make clear that we would understand the plays of Plautus much better if more of this lively theatrical life had survived. Even without whole texts, extensive archeological remains, or contemporary accounts, however, one thing is clear: Plautus and his audience had considerable experience with a wide variety of scripted and unscripted theatrical forms, including many *palliatae* very similar to those of Plautus; just possibly *togatae*, which brought to scripted comedy a uniquely Italian flair; mythological tragedies (*crepidatae*), to which Plautus frequently responded; *praetextae* with plots drawn from Roman history; numerous forms of dance; two distinct but related types of farcical skits, the *Atellana* and the mime; and probably other performance types of which no record has survived. Though the exact degree to which all these forms determined how Plautus changed the Greek comedies he adapted cannot be determined with certainty, there can be little doubt that this theatrical smorgasbord helped to make Plautine comedy the rich phenomenon that it is.

FURTHER READING

The best general survey of Roman Republican theater is Manuwald (2011). The older surveys of Duckworth (1952), Bieber (1961), Beare (1964) and Beacham (1991) also remain useful. Wiseman has discussed his theories on Roman theater in numerous volumes, including (2004, 2015). On the *fabula Atellana*, see Frassinetti (1967), and the essays in Raffaelli and Tontini (2010, 2013). Panayotakis (2010) offers an excellent introduction to mime. For the fragments, see Bonaria (1965). See also Fantham (1989). For essays on various aspects of pre-literary Italian farce and its possible influence on Plautus, see Vogt-Spira (1989, 1993), and Benz et al. (1995). Boyle (2006) is a good introduction to Roman tragedy. Manuwald (2001) provides the most thorough review of our evidence for the *praetexta*. See also Flower (1995). For the fragments of both comedy and tragedy, Ribbeck (1897–1898) and Warmington (1935–1936), while dated, remain good starting places. For tragedy, Schauer (2012) on Livius and Naevius, Manuwald (2012) on Ennius, and Schierl (2006) on Pacuvius are more reliable. Feeney (2016) describes how remarkable it is that Livius Andronicus and his successors created a new national literature.

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CHAPTER TWO

Plautus and Greek Drama

Sebastiana Nervegna

In comic competitions, Menander was often defeated by Philemon, an author by no means his equal, owing to canvassing, personal favor, and factional politics. Menander once happened to run into Philemon and asked him, “Pray tell me, Philemon – when you beat me, does not it make you blush?” (Gell. *NA* 17.4.1)

Preserved by a scholar active in the second century CE, Aulus Gellius, this anecdote offers a good introduction to two key figures of Greek New Comedy: Menander and Philemon. The way Menander confronts Philemon reminds us both that Greek dramatists staged their plays within a competitive context and that victories and losses did matter to them. Other ancient authors also comment on Menander’s little success during his lifetime, typically contrasting it to the stellar fame that he enjoyed after his death (see also Mart. 5.10.9; Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.72; Men. T 71, 98, 101).¹ Menander’s plays circulated far and wide throughout antiquity. Students continued to read, copy, and study them at all stages of their training. Actors continued to perform them in both public festivals and private settings well into the Imperial period. Select scenes from Menander’s plays were also very popular among ancient house-owners, who used them to decorate their halls, reception rooms, and even gardens (Nervegna 2013, chapters 2–4). By the time Aulus Gellius composed his works, Menander had virtually eclipsed Philemon and a host of comic poets including Diphilus, the other prominent author of Greek New Comedy. Although ancient scholars consistently name Menander, Diphilus, and Philemon as the three canonical authors of Greek New Comedy, this triad was quickly reduced to Menander alone. He became the byword for Greek comedy in general (Nervegna 2013, pp. 107–110).

A different picture emerges if we consider other types of sources for the afterlife of Greek New Comedies from the fourth through to the first century (all ancient dates BCE

unless otherwise noted). The theater-related records scattered around the Mediterranean tell us that ancient actors continued to stage not only Menander's comedies but also those by Diphilus, Philemon, and other poets. This chapter reconstructs the fascinating process whereby select Greek New Comedies traveled around the ancient world and eventually provided source material for Plautus and his colleagues in Republican Rome. I start with a general overview of the leading authors of Greek New Comedy and their works, before sketching their theatrical reception in Athens, and Greece in general, throughout the Hellenistic period. As the pictorial record from fourth-century Sicily and South Italy suggests, Greek New Comedies quickly crossed the Adriatic to be staged for local audiences. I focus on two vessels likely evoking two comedies that Plautus adapted into Latin, *Amphitruo* and *Casina*. After considering the visual material from Sicily and South Italy and how Greek pots can also shed light on Roman plays, I turn to a more traditional approach to Roman drama, the comparison between dramatic scripts. The key case is Plautus's *Bacchides* and its Greek model, Menander's *Dis Exapaton*. Close study of both texts helps us identify two major elements setting Plautus's comedies apart from their Greek counterparts: more music and jokes.

Menander, Diphilus, and Philemon in Hellenistic Greece

The biographies of Menander, Diphilus, and Philemon are largely obscure. Menander was born in 342 and died most likely in 291, but we lack similar dates for his rivals. All we know is that Philemon was older than Menander and that Diphilus was a contemporary of Menander. A little more can be said about their careers and competitive records. Menander debuted at a very young age and achieved eight victories at the main dramatic festivals in Athens, the Great Dionysia and the Lenaea. According to the epigraphic record, Philemon was crowned at the Great Dionysia at least once, in 327, and three times at the Lenaea. Diphilus scored the same number of victories at the Lenaea, the first one probably dating to the late 310s.² As far as we can tell, Menander and Philemon were well-known already within their lifetimes. Shortly after Menander's death, in all likelihood, the Athenians honored him with a statue crafted by the finest artists of the time. They placed it in the Theater of Dionysus, right next to the statuary complex representing the three canonical tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. In fact, the inscribed base of Menander's statue is still extant (*IG* II² 3777 = Men. T 25; see Fittschen 1991; Papastamati – von Moock 2007). Unlike Menander, Philemon was not born in Athens. He likely came from Syracuse, in Sicily, but became a naturalized Athenian by 306 (Anon. *On Comedy*, Proleg. de com. Ill 53 p. 10 Koster; *IG* II² 3017 = T 2, 15). Talent and fame probably had something to do with his citizenship grant.

One of the reasons why we lack biographical details on Menander, Diphilus, and Philemon is that their plays do not contain any. Fifth-century comic poets often refer to themselves and to their rivals, typically using the comic chorus as their mouthpiece. One choral intervention in particular, the *parabasis*, the “arrival of the poet on stage,” offered a vehicle for self-promotion, literary polemic, and personal attacks (Biles 2011,

esp. chapter 1). Later Greek comedy, by contrast, largely disposed of the chorus. A chorus did sing and dance on the stage, but their songs were no longer integrated into the dramatic action and left only a little trace in Menander's texts: a passing reference to their first entry and a heading (see further below). That later comedies have so little to say about real, historical figures further reflects a major change affecting the subject matter of comic drama. Ancient scholars writing the history of Greek comedy divided this genre into three types, Old Comedy, Middle Comedy, and New Comedy, according to their engagement with contemporary politics and the personal invective that they featured. Platonius, for instance, is typical in identifying Old Comedy and its open attacks as the mode of fifth-century radical democracy. On his reading, Middle Comedy and its mythological parodies came to the forefront under the 30 Tyrants, giving way to New Comedy during the Macedonian domination. Although the evolutionary model underlying this classification does not do justice to variety and continuity, we can identify a clear shift in the *dominant style*: fifth-century comedies were in general more concerned with political than domestic themes, and the opposite was true for later plays. Comedies that made fun of traditional stories about gods and heroes, usually labeled "mythological burlesque" or "mythological travesty," are well attested throughout the first half of the fourth century but declined shortly after, at least in Athens. Only a few of the titles preserved for New Comedies suggest mythological themes (Platonius, *On the distinction among comedies*, Proleg. de com. I, pp. 3–6 Koster 1975; cf. Nervegna 2013, pp. 32–42; Konstantakos 2014).

Menander, Diphilus, and Philemon are consistently named as the stars of Greek New Comedy, but an ancient scholar counts a total of 64 poets active in this genre and adds three more names to the list of its leading poets: Philippides, Posidippus, and Apollodorus of Carystus (Anon. *On Comedy*, Proleg. de com. Ill 53–4 p. 10 Koster 1975). Unfortunately, very little remains of their dramas, and even the best-preserved New Comedy poet, Menander, is largely lost. Although Menander composed over 100 comedies, we have only one complete play, *Dyskolos*, more than half of two others, *Samia* and *Epitrepontes*, substantial parts of four more, *Aspis*, *Perikeiromene*, *Sikyonios* or *Sikyonioi*, and *Misoumenos*, and extracts from many other comedies. Diphilus and Philemon were just as prolific as Menander, yet their dramas survive only in fragments, well over 100 for Diphilus and almost 200 for Philemon. Since these fragments are preserved by authors largely interested in moralizing excerpts or linguistic peculiarities, they shed little light on the original comedies.

More evidence for the plots and motifs of Greek New Comedies comes from their Latin adaptations by Roman poets. We cannot identify the Greek model(s) that inspired all the extant Roman comedies, but there are some firm points. Plautus adapted at least three plays by Menander (*Dis Exapaton*, *Synaristosai*, and *Adelphoi A*), two or three by Philemon (*Emporos*, *Thesauros*, and possibly *Phasma*), and two or three by Diphilus (*Kleroumenoi*, the model of *Rudens*, and possibly *Schedia*). By his own admission, Terence drew from Menander's *Andria*, *Perinthia*, *Eunuchos*, *Heauton Timoroumenos*, *Kolax*, and *Adelphoi B*, using them either as primary or secondary models. When Terence adapted Menander's *Adelphoi B* in his *Adelphoe*, for instance, he also included a scene from Diphilus's *Synapothneskontes*, the same scene that Plautus omitted in his Latin version of Diphilus's drama (Ter. *Ad.* 6–14; this practice is known as *contaminatio*; see

further Nervegna 2013, pp. 76–99, with earlier literature). Plautus and Terence drew much material from the canonical authors of Greek New Comedy, but they also helped themselves to the plays by other dramatists. An otherwise unknown playwright, Demophilus, composed the model of Plautus's *Asinaria*, and Alexis's *Karchedonios* probably lies behind Plautus's *Poenulus*. Terence adapted two plays by Apollodorus of Carystus, *Epidikazomenos* and *Hecyra*.

The New Comedies of Greece and Rome typically feature well-to-do families and stock characters. They are populated by young men in love, strict fathers, pregnant daughters, greedy pimps, loyal friends, and clever slaves. Their plots typically revolve around a love story and follow a specific pattern. A young man falls in love with a young woman, but an obstacle stands in the way of the romance. He typically devises and puts into practice a clever scheme, often with the help of his slave, and the obstacle is successfully overcome (cf. Frye 1957, esp. pp. 163–167; Bettini 1982 uses algebraic formulas to analyze Plautus's plots). Within this general storyline, there is much room for variation: the emphasis is not on *what* happens but on *how* it happens. In Menander's *Dyskolos*, for instance, the obstacle preventing the romance is Knemon, the grumpy father of the girl loved by the young man of the play, Sostratos. Knemon hates people and has isolated both himself and his daughter. Sostratos's many attempts to win him over fail miserably until Knemon falls into a well, is rescued by his stepson Gorgias, and, recanting his ways, entrusts his daughter to Gorgias, who then arranges her marriage with Sostratos. *Dyskolos* features an interfering father as a blocking character, and *Aspis* a greedy uncle, but Menander's couples face all kinds of obstacles, from misunderstandings (*Samia*) to mistaken or lost identities (*Perikeiromene*, *Misoumenos*) and rape (*Epitrepontes* and *Georgos*, for instance). Love is ubiquitous, and so is the wedding or reunion at the end of the play.

The formulaic plots of New Comedy help explain why New Comedy poets were very prolific. Not all their comedies could have premiered at the main dramatic festivals in Athens, and several of them were evidently produced elsewhere. The Dionysia festivals held in various demes across Attica, the so-called "Rural Dionysia," come up as likely venues, but other possibilities should also be considered (Csapo and Wilson 2015, p. 321; Nervegna 2013, pp. 21–22). In the early third century, the citizens of Eretria, on the island of Euboea, erected a statue of Menander in their theater, and the honor that they granted to Menander does suggest that they were familiar with him and his plays (*IG* XII 9.280; Men. T 30, with Nervegna 2013, pp. 37–38). Philemon was reportedly shipwrecked in Egypt when he met Magas, King of Cyrenaica, and Magas intimidated Philemon for abusing him in one of his comedies. Philemon probably staged his plays also in Egypt.³ We perceive similar mobility about the Mediterranean in the datum that Diphilus, who came from Sinope on the Black Sea, was buried in Athens but died on the island of Smyrna (Anon. *On Comedy*, Proleg. de com. Ill 61–62 p. 10; Koster 1975; *IG* II² 10321; Diph. T 1, 3). Menander reportedly rejected invitations to foreign courts and never left Athens, but his two rivals traveled far and wide (Pliny *HN* 7.111, Alciph. 4.18.5; Men. T 15, 20).

Athens, however, continued to watch performances of the comedies by Menander, Diphilus, and Philemon throughout the Hellenistic period. Inscriptions tell us that an "old" tragedy was presented for the first time at the Great Dionysia in 386, and three plays by Euripides were staged in the same context between 341 and 339. Performances of

“old” comedies entered the festival program only later, in 311. Unlike their tragic counterparts, comic actors did not restage fifth-century comedies but more recent drama such as Anaxandrides’s *Thensauros*, the earliest case on record.⁴ Be they tragic or comic, these repeat performances were offered outside the dramatic competition, as a gift to the audience and as a gesture to the great playwrights of the past. In the second half of the second century, acting companies produced at least two plays by Menander, *Phasma* and *Misogynes*, while Philemon’s *Phokeis* was likely staged again earlier on, toward the end of the third century.⁵ At one point during the Hellenistic period, old comedies and old tragedies also came to be presented in Athens within a competition of their own, a contest between theatrical classics. We do not know when this new kind of contest was established, but a fragmentary inscription from the Athenian agora records the placement of three actors performing old comedies probably around 240. The successful actor staged a play by Diphilus, *Misanthropoi*, the second-best performed Menander’s *Phasma*, and the third-best Philemon’s *Ptoche* (Agora I 2972; cf. Tracy 2015, pp. 576–577). This is, incidentally, the earliest record to name together the three champions of New Comedy. The theater-related inscriptions from Hellenistic Athens are unique in naming the plays staged under the category of old drama. This is not to say that similar performances did not take place elsewhere: festivals multiplied during the Hellenistic period, and several of them featured dramatic performances staged within two different categories, “old plays” and “new plays.” By the first century, for instance, the region of Boeotia, in central Greece, celebrated several festivals hosting both types of drama (Nervegna 2013, pp. 67–70, 99–110). Yet the plays staged in these venues were not recorded. Specific evidence comes from elsewhere in the ancient world, fourth-century Sicily and South Italy.

Traveling Plays: Greek New Comedies in Sicily and South Italy

Sicily and South Italy hosted performances of Attic tragedies and comedies throughout the Classical and Hellenistic periods. Aeschylus himself visited the court of the tyrant of Syracuse, Hieron I, more than once. He staged and restaged his plays in Syracuse and most likely also elsewhere (*Life of Aeschylus* sections 9, 18) – a vivid indicator of the spread of Greek drama in Sicily and South Italy from the early fifth century onwards (Taplin 2007, pp. 9–15; Csapo and Wilson 2015, pp. 328–344). Some of the most distinguished comic poets active in the fourth century, including most likely Philemon, hailed from this part of the world. The stone theaters erected across Sicily and South Italy were probably used for dramatic performances on a regular basis (Mitens 1988; Marconi 2012; Csapo and Wilson 2015, esp. p. 331), and so were the temporary structures commonly reproduced on the theater-related pots. Indeed, the iconographic record helps us identify certain details of these performances. The painters active in Sicily and South Italy crafted and decorated thousands of vessels, and relatively few of them feature images related to Greek drama. If we count only the pots decorated with dramatic scenes rather than masks or single actors, for instance, we have 401 tragic vases and 132 comic vases (Todisco et al. 2003; Green [*personal communication*]; on comic vases from Sicily and South Italy cf. Taplin 1993; Green 2012; Compton-Engle 2015, esp. pp. 17–37). These vessels were

painted throughout most of the fourth century in four specific areas: Apulia; Lucania; Sicily; and Campania, including the town of Paestum, which developed its own style. Unlike tragedy-related vases, comic pots are overtly theatrical. They reproduce figures wearing grotesque masks with gaping mouths, dressed in various kinds of costumes, and often set on a stage. The overwhelming majority of comic pots defy identification, but at least two vessels stand out as possibly evoking two Greek comedies that Plautus used as his models.

The first vessel is a red-figure Apulian bell-krater produced in the Greek colony of Taras, modern Taranto, attributed to the Graz Painter and dated to around the mid-fourth century (Figure 2.1). It shows two comic actors on a raised stage. The figure on the right, who is clearly a slave, wears a comic bodysuit with its typical long sleeves, leggings, and padded belly and buttocks. He lacks a covering costume (he is “stage-naked”) and sports a large phallus with a white string tied around the foreskin. The figure on the left is an old man also wearing a comic bodysuit but with an accompanying cloak, footgear, and no visible phallus. As appropriate for a man of some social standing, his cloak also covers his left arm. They are both vigorously gesturing. The old man points toward the slave with his right hand, seemingly in anger or at least frustration. The slave raises his left hand while holding his right arm straight down, palm facing down, and his body language suggests that he is both objecting and justifying himself. A rolled pack used to transport various items lies in the middle of the stage; the old man and his slave are evidently on a journey. On the front edge of the stage, right below the two figures, two inscriptions added in white read, “Xanthias” and “Aphitryon,” which is probably just a phonetic spelling for “Amphitryon.” The play depicted on this vessel is likely the model of Plautus’ *Amphitruo*



Figure 2.1 Bell-krater, attributed to the Graz Painter. Side A: theatrical scene (4th c. BCE).

(Green 2015, pp. 66–79). The visual record suggests that mythological comedies circulated far and wide across fourth-century Sicily and South Italy, but Roman poets and their audiences do not seem to have been fond of them. Plautus's *Amphitruo* is doubly exceptional. It is both the only mythological comedy to survive nearly complete from antiquity and the only mythological comedy to have found its way onto the Roman stage (see Chapter 14, pp. 209–213).

Plautus's *Amphitruo* takes its name from the legendary leader of the Theban army and dramatizes the birth of Heracles, the son of Amphitruo's wife, Alcmena, and a god, Jupiter. It is a comedy of errors involving two pairs of doublets, with Jupiter and Mercury disguised as Amphitruo and his slave Sosia. In Plautus's text, Amphitruo and Sosia appear together in a lively scene (551–632) that does bear some resemblance to the image decorating the Apulian vessel. They are on their way home from the harbor, and at this point in the play Mercury has already confronted Sosia in a long and entertaining scene. Mercury stood guard in front of Amphitruo's house to buy some time for his father, who was enjoying a prolonged love affair with Alcmena, gave Sosia a good thrashing, and nearly persuaded him that he had lost his identity. Sosia tries to describe that episode to his master shortly after, but Amphitruo quickly loses his temper. Full of indignation, he levels all kinds of charges against Sosia: he must be drunk, mad, or just laughing at him. Right from the start, Amphitruo presents himself as "the irascible comic master" (556–557, 569–570, 574–575, 581, 585a; see Christenson 2000, p. 241).

Since ancient painters did not reproduce snapshots of specific performances, and Plautus creatively adapted his models, it is not surprising that a few elements differentiate the painted image from the extant text of Plautus's play. Consider the setting, for instance. Two elements that the painter included on the vase, the Ionic columns flanking the stage and the sash hanging in the background, suggest a sanctuary. In Plautus's comedy, by contrast, Amphitruo and Sosia are on their way home. Like all returning travelers on Plautus's stage, they are also accompanied by a train of baggage carriers (referred to at 551 and 854; for the convention in Plautus, see Wright 1974, esp. pp. 141–146). Both the vase and Plautus's text, however, place special emphasis on one item. There is a vessel attached to the rolled pack painted on the pot, and its central position within the scene suggests that it is a significant prop. There is a vessel also in Plautus's comedy, the golden *patera* ("drinking-bowl") that Amphitruo won in battle after defeating King Pterelas (260–261). Amphitruo brings it back to Thebes carefully sealed in a casket to show it to Alcmena but later realizes that his casket is empty. Jupiter stole the *patera* and gave it to Alcmena to further persuade her that she spent the night with her husband (760–794). The drinking-bowl is a key prop in the play. It establishes a character's identity, helps characterize Amphitruo as a braggart soldier, and is at the center of funny wordplay (Polt 2013).

The second pot that we can tie to one of Plautus's models is a red-figure calyx-krater attributed to the Manfria Painter (Figure 2.2). Made in Sicily, probably in Syracuse, around 330, this vessel is decorated with a scene set on a raised stage with four columns placed behind four figures. These figures are, from left to right: a young woman, a young man, a bulky figure turned toward the young man, and an old man leaning on his stick, slightly removed. The third figure is key to understanding the scene. Although he wears a long cloak with purple sleeves, just like the young woman on the left, he has a slave mask.



Figure 2.2 Calyx-krater, circle of the Manfria Painter. Side A: theatrical scene (third quarter of 4th c. BCE).

He is a slave in disguise, most likely dressed as a bride. The incense-burner placed next to him also supports this interpretation: the scene takes place in a sanctuary, which is the most likely setting for a wedding.

The image depicted here recalls the ruse in one of Plautus's most successful plays, *Casina* (Handley 1997, pp. 194–197; Green 2002, pp. 114–115; see Chapter 10). *Casina* is at the center of an amorous struggle between a father and his son: Lysidamus, who raised Casina as a slave girl with his wife Cleostrata, and Euthynicus, who is supposed to marry her. Lysidamus manages to send his son on a business trip and arranges for his farm manager, Olympio, to marry Casina just to have sexual access to her. Cleostrata, who has her suspicions, opposes this plan by siding with her son, who wants the slave Chalinus to marry Casina and stand in for him until his return. Lots are drawn, Lysidamus wins, and Cleostrata retaliates by bringing out a special bride: Chalinus. The slave “walks around with a garland, dressed in white, bathed and adorned,” ready to humiliate both Olympio and Lysidamus (767–768; Christenson 2019, pp. 67–70). The extant prologue of Plautus's *Casina*, which opened a repeat performance of the play about one generation after its premiere, gives us some important information: “this comedy is called *Kleroumenoi* in Greek, *Sortientes* in Latin. Diphilus wrote it in Greek, and Plautus [...] wrote it anew in Latin” (11–16, 31–34). We are also told that Plautus made two major changes to Diphilus's script. First, he cut the scene whereby a slave disclosed that Casina was a freeborn Athenian eligible for marriage. Plautus got rid of the slave (“he is sick in bed,” 37–38) while also removing Euthynicus: “today, in this comedy, [Euthynicus] will not be back to the city;

Plautus did not want to and wreaked the bridge on his way home” (64–66). The final lines of the play do seem to tell us more about Plautus’s model by adding that, after the recognition scene, Casina will marry Euthynicus (1013–1014; cf. Lowe 2003, p. 175). Diphilus’s play likely ended with a wedding, and this detail squares well with the scene on the Sicilian calyx-krater. Euthynicus may be identified with the young man depicted on the pot, and the fact that the young woman on the left is touching him does suggest that she will marry him.

These two comic vases help us reconstruct, at least in part, the background to Plautus’s activities. The models of Plautus’s *Amphitruo* and *Casina* likely circulated across Sicily and South Italy well before their reception in Republican Rome. That Plautus adapted them into Latin for performance in Rome tells us both that both comedies were popular on South Italian stages and that they appealed to audiences with different cultural backgrounds.

Plautus’s *Bacchides* and Menander’s *Dis Exapaton*

The Greek pots from Sicily and South Italy have entered scholarly discussion on Roman drama only very recently. The whole field has traditionally focused on dramatic scripts and their comparison to chart the reception of Greek New Comedy in Rome and to assess the original contributions of Roman dramatic poets. Working on stylistic grounds, Eduard Fraenkel (1922, 1960, 2007) first identified a series of elements that Plautus introduced into his Latin adaptations, and the lucky discovery of a papyrus with parts of Menander’s *Dis Exapaton*, the model of Plautus’ *Bacchides*, largely confirmed Fraenkel’s intuitions.⁶ By allowing us to compare, for the first time, a substantial part of a comedy by Plautus with its Greek model, this tattered papyrus gives us direct access into Plautus’s methods of adaptation. The comparison between the two passages shows that Plautus’s version is a mixture of close translation and free adaptation, with cuts, additions, and changes of tone and pace. It is also injected with music and jokes.

The dramatic situation that we find in these two excerpts involves a convoluted confusion of identities. A young man called Mnesilochus (= Sostratos) falls in love with a courtesan, Bacchis, during a business trip. Bacchis is on her way to Mnesilochus’s hometown, Athens, and Mnesilochus writes to his friend Pistoclerus (= Moschos), asking him to trace and protect her. In doing so, Pistoclerus falls in love with Bacchis’s courtesan sister, who is also named Bacchis, and here start the problems. Back in Athens, Mnesilochus thinks that Pistoclerus is having an affair with his own sweetheart and sabotages the clever plan that his slave Chrysalus (= Syros) concocted to secure the money to purchase Bacchis. He returns the gold to his father and realizes soon after that he has made a big mistake.

When the papyrus scrap starts, there are three characters on the stage: Sostratos, Moschos’s father, and his tutor, Lydos. The last two characters are leaving, and we can read their departing words: they urge Sostratos to scold his friend, acting as a champion of morality (11–17). Sostratos has just learned that Moschos is involved with a courtesan, whom he mistakes for his own sweetheart, and the two characters mistake his reaction as a moral judgment toward Moschos! Alone on the stage and overcome by emotions, Sostratos delivers a short monologue and resolves to pay back his father (18–30). This transaction

takes place over two scenes falling before and after the heading “[song] of the chorus.” Once again alone on the stage, Sostratos continues to vent his internal turmoil (91–102), then Moschos arrives, the two friends greet each other, and the papyrus breaks off right at the start of the following confrontation. Plautus’s corresponding passage starts with a close adaptation of Menander’s lines. On Plautus’s stage, we also find both Pistoclerus’s father and tutor, Philoxenus and Lydus, urging Mnesilochus to scold Pistoclerus and then leaving him alone (with his baggage carriers, 494–498). Mnesilochus delivers one long monologue, finally resolves to return the gold to his father, and leaves (500–525). Back onto the stage, he meets Pistoclerus, and a confrontation takes place (530–572).

The first and most conspicuous change that Plautus made to the Greek script is a structural one. Since Roman comedies were performed without act-breaks, Plautus adapted the Greek script to the conventions of Roman theater by removing the choral interlude, cutting the two scenes taking place on either side of the act-break, eliminating Mnesilochus’s father and moving the transaction offstage. This structural change, which inevitably accelerated the pace of the action, also allowed him to combine Sostratos’s two monologues into one, expanded monologue. The tone of this monologue is probably the second main feature setting Plautus’s script apart from Menander’s. Sostratos is in a flurry of emotions, and he voices his confused feelings as he moves toward Bacchis’s house to confront her, but quickly changes his mind:

Well, that does for Moschos. She’ll hold on to *him*. (But you got your claws into Sostratos first, my lady). She’s a fighter, and I know she’ll deny it – and bring all the hosts of heaven into the act to back her. I only hope ... oh, to the hell with her. [*Moves towards the door.*] Wait a bit; perhaps she’ll beguile you, Sostratos. I’m completely her slave, but just let her try her wiles on a man with empty pockets! I’ll give the money to my father. She’ll soon stop making up to me when she finds that she’s conversing, as they way with a corpse. (*Dis Exapaton* 18–29, trans. Miller 1987, based on Sandbach’s 1972 edition)

Sostratos imagines himself speaking to his sweetheart, imagines her replies, then speaks again to himself. The tone is serious and pathetic. Note also that, when Moschos finally meets Sostratos, he realizes right away that there is something wrong with him. He asks Sostratos why he is “crestfallen” and “about to cry” while also suggesting that Sostratos is trying to hide his tears (*Dis Exapaton* 104–105 with Halliwell 2008, p. 389).

Here, by contrast, Plautus’s Mnesilochus:

I am quite uncertain which of the two to think my greatest enemy, Bacchis or my friend. She fancied him more? Let her have him. Fine! By god, someone will pay for this ... yes, I will. Let no-one ever trust my plighted troth, if I don’t absolutely utterly ... love her. She shall not say she’d got a man to laugh at. I’ll go straight home and ... steal something from father to give her. I’ll get revenge in many ways. I’ll bring her right to beggary ... my father’s. But am I in possession of my senses to prattle on on what is going to happen? By god, I love her, as sure as I can be. But rather than increase her weight of wealth by a feather’s fluff from any money of mine, I’d choose to outdo beggars in beggary. By heaven she’ll never live to laugh at me. I will pay back all the gold to my father, that is decided. When I am poor and empty-handed, she can wheedle me, for then her wheedling will be no more use than telling tales to a dead man in his grave. (*Bacch.* 500–519, trans. Barsby 1986)

Mnesilochus acts like Sostratos but sounds quite different. He throws in a series of *para prosdokian* (contrary-to-expectation) jokes, one after the other. Whether they make us laugh out loud or simply smile, they undercut Mnesilochus's threats and make him a more self-conscious comic character.

Finally, Plautus also recast part of the script into song by turning Menander's spoken iambs into musically accompanied trochaics: both Philoxenus and Lydus sing, and so do Mnesilochus and Pistoclerus when they meet. The music here contributes to changing the pace of the scene. In Menander the two friends quickly meet and greet; in Plautus the dialogue is more formal, and Pistoclerus hastens to invite his friend to a typically Roman "welcome-home dinner" (536–537). Menander's comedies in general use two main meters, the iambic trimeter and, more rarely, the trochaic tetrameter, reserved for farcical or solemn scenes. We do not know if the trochaic tetrameter was musically accompanied (Sommerstein 2013, p. 233) but even so, the musical element in Menander is not as substantial as in Plautus. Menander seems to have composed songs only exceptionally, for specific situations: as far as we know, only three or four of his comedies included a song.⁷ Plautus's plays, by contrast, are full of music and musical virtuosity, which translates into long and sophisticated songs. Given that about 63% of Plautus's lines are in meters other than the spoken iambic senarius, "accompanied performance was the norm" on his stage. In Roman comedies, music served more than one purpose: it "gave [them] form, played a significant role in making the plays enjoyable and contributed to their meaning" (Moore 2012, pp. 15, 376; on music in *Bacchides*, see Chapter 17).

Celebrating Plautus in Antiquity

At the end of Plautus's *Mostellaria*, the old man Theopropides comes to a sad realization: his son and his slave Tranio have siphoned money off from him. Fuming with rage, he resolves to give Tranio a good beating, but Tranio takes off and sits on the altar, leaving Theopropides to address his son's friend and ask, in despair, "what am I to do now?" Tranio jumps in to respond: "If you're a friend of Diphilus or Philemon, be sure to tell 'em how your slave fooled you. You'll give 'em the top stories of deception in their comedies." (1149–1151). Tranio's lines are both revealing and cheeky, in more than one way. First, they shed light on Plautus's audiences and their appreciation of Diphilus, Philemon, and their tricky slaves. Menander was not unrivaled in Republican Rome. Second, they betray Plautus's competitive stance toward his Greek counterparts. Plautus names Diphilus and Philemon, only to volunteer his finest comic plots back to them! His tone is sassy and patronizing; it is a game of comic one-upmanship (Anderson 1993, pp. 32–33, 58–59).

Plautus's biography is just as elusive as those of Greek New Comedy poets, but among the various stories preserved by the ancient tradition there is an epitaph composed for him: "after Plautus's death, Comedy is in mourning. The stage is deserted, then Laughter, Play, Joke, and countless Rhythms all wept together" (Gell. *NA* 1.24.3, cf. Chapter 25, p. 379). Note the emphasis on "fun" as a key element of Plautus's drama. No Greek New Comedy poet is celebrated in this way. Although Menander's comedies often end by appealing to "Victory, the laughter-loving virgin," and an

ancient author such as Plutarch could celebrate them for mixing playful and serious material, Menander's characters take themselves very seriously, shed real tears, speak more about pain than laughter, and leave modern scholars to debate what is funny about them.⁸ When Plautus adapted Greek plays to entertain Latin-speaking audiences, he breathed new life into them, and the epitaph tells us that Plautus's own touches – his irresistible jokes and sophisticated songs, above all – were not lost on later generations. The epitaph pictures the stage empty after Plautus's death, but Plautus's characters continued to walk on it. The actor who delivers the surviving prologue of *Casina* addresses the audience and explains to them why his troupe is offering a repeat performance of the play: "rumor has it that you keenly wish to watch Plautus's comedies" (11–12).

NOTES

- 1 The fragments and *testimonia* for Greek comic poets are cited according to the edition by Kassel and Austin (1983–2001).
- 2 For Menander's debut, see Anon. *On Comedy* (Proleg. de com. Ill) 58–59 p. 10 Koster (T 3) with Schröder (1996), who reviews the dates for Menander's life; for the number of his victories, see Gell. *NA* 17.4.4 (T 46). For Philemon, see *Marm. Par. FGrH* 239 B 7 (earliest victory at the Great Dionysia; T 13) and *IG* II² 2325.161 (victories at the Lenaea; T 14). For Diphilus, see *IG* II² 2325.163 (T 4).
- 3 Plut. *Mor.* 458a; see also Alciphron (4.18.5), who mentions that Philemon joined Ptolemy's court (Phil. T 9–10). Bruzzese (2011, pp. 17–22) casts some doubt on these biographic details but does follow Webster (1953: pp. 125–126) in allowing that at least one of Philemon's comedies, *Panegyris*, was produced in Alexandria.
- 4 *IG* II² 2318.201–3 (earliest performance of "old" tragedy); *IG* II² 2320.1–2, 18–19, 32–23 (performances of Euripides's plays) and *IG* II² 2323a.5–6 (earliest performance of "old" comedy).
- 5 *IG* II² 2323.129–30, 206–207 (Men. T 54, 55), *IG* II² 2323.100–101 (Philemon the Younger T 4, but this record is more likely to refer to Philemon than his son).
- 6 P.Oxy. LXIV 4407, preserving Men. *Dis Exapaton* 11–102, which overlaps with Plaut. *Bacch.* 494–562. Select references: Handley (1968), Barsby (1986, esp. pp. 139–145); Goldberg (1990); Gratwick (1995); Arnott (1997–2000, esp. 1997 pp. 141–173 and 148–151). I follow Barsby's edition of Plautus' *Bacchides* and Arnott's edition of Menander's works, including *Dis Exapaton*.
- 7 There was a song in *Theophoroumene* (schol. Eur. *Andr.* 103), *Phasma* (Caesius Bassus, GrL 6.1.255 K) and *Leukadia* (11–16). Add also a relief (Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 6687) probably related to a comedy by Menander. There is an aulos player in the middle of the composition, and he probably accompanied the song of the drunk young man reproduced on the left.
- 8 Men. *Dys.* 968–969, *Mis.* 995–996, *Sik.* 422–423. Plut. *Mor.* 854c, 712b–c. On laughter in Menander, see Halliwell 2008, chapter 8. Diphilus was reportedly "frigid," and ancient scholars make "seriousness" the hallmark of later Greek comedy in general; see Ath. 13.585b–c, *TC* XVIII, *Life of Aristophanes* 2–4.

FURTHER READING

The reception of Greek drama in Rome is part of the larger trend whereby Greek drama spread far and wide in antiquity. Manuwald (2011) reconstructs the origins of Roman Republican theater and drama. Feeney (2016, esp. chapter 2) offers a recent and valuable study on the “translation project” of Roman dramatists in general. Fontaine (2010) is wholly devoted to Plautus’s funny words.

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CHAPTER THREE

Stages and Stagecraft

Anne H. Groton

In Plautus's day, large outdoor theaters would have been a common sight in Greece and the rest of the Greek-speaking world, including Sicily and southern Italy – but not in Rome. By then, Greek theaters were being built with durability in mind: many a hillside had been adorned with rows of stone or marble benches to create a natural-looking *theātron* (“watching area”) affording unobscured views of the ground-level *orchēstra* (“dancing area”), the *skēnē* (stage building), and the *proskēnion* (stage). To the Hellenistic Greeks, a theater would have represented not only an architectural achievement in which all of them could take pride, but also a community center; a familiar place where citizens regularly gathered to participate, as both spectators and performers, in civic and religious ceremonies. There they could celebrate their Greek ethnicity and exercise their freedom of expression on a grand scale.

To the Romans of the late third century and early second century BCE, whose lives were constantly disrupted by wars with their Mediterranean rivals (e.g. Hannibal of Carthage, Philip V of Macedonia, and Antiochus III of Syria), a Greek theater would have signified something quite different. True, it might have impressed them with its natural beauty, enormous size, and stunning acoustics, but it was not a place where they could ever feel completely at home. It was an imposing, highly visible, and potentially even dangerous advertisement for a rival culture whose prestige was so envied by the Romans, especially by those who had grown up studying Greek literature in school, that they eventually appropriated Attic drama, translating the plays into Latin and reconfiguring them as vehicles for articulating the Romans' own cultural identity (Feeney 2016). The social and political pressure felt by the Romans to keep themselves distinct from the Greeks may partly explain why there was such strong resistance to the permanent presence of a theater building in Rome, even during the late second century and early first century, when the Romans' neighbors in Campania had no qualms about constructing stone theaters in a style derived from that of Hellenistic Greek theaters (Rawson 1985; Sear 2006).

Opposition to a Permanent Theater in Rome

From at least as far back as 240 (all ancient dates BCE), when Latin adaptations of Greek comedies and tragedies were first performed, all the way down to 55, the city seems to have maintained the practice of constructing a temporary stage every time *ludi scaenici* (“scenic games”) were held. At first this may have been relatively simple and inexpensive to do, but by 194 the Romans were celebrating at least four public festivals each year that included the staging of scripted plays: *Ludi Megalenses* (Magna Mater) in early April, *Ludi Apollinares* (Apollo) in mid-July, *Ludi Romani* (Jupiter, Juno, Minerva) in September, and *Ludi Plebeii* (Jupiter) in November; the *Ludi Cereales* (Ceres and Liber) in mid-April may belong on the list, too (Franko 2014). For each festival a stage would need to be set up, probably in the vicinity of a temple associated with the god or goddess to whom the festival was dedicated. Stages would also be required for any *ludi scaenici* that were offered to the public in the context of privately sponsored *munera* such as funerals, dedications of temples, and celebrations of military victories. Under those circumstances, why did the Romans continue to rely on temporary stages for so long? What kept them from constructing a single theater building that would not have to be dismantled every year and that could be used for all sorts of performances?

There were, in fact, at least three failed attempts to construct such a building. In 179 the two censors initiated a number of public works projects in the city: Marcus Aemilius Lepidus let out a contract for “a watching area and a stage near the temple of Apollo” (*theatrum et proscaenium ad Apollinis*), presumably with the aim of enhancing the *Ludi Apollinares*; his colleague Marcus Fulvius Nobilior sponsored the addition of a portico to that same temple (Livy 40.51.3). They may have had in mind a “theater-temple” like those whose remains can still be seen at several sites in Latium (Hanson 1959). In such complexes, dating from the mid-second century (Gabii) to the early first century (Palestrina, Tivoli), the temple is situated at the top of the sanctuary, and the semicircular stone staircase leading up to it doubles as the area for spectators; the god or goddess thus has an ideal perch for surveying both the audience and whatever is presented on the stage in his or her honor. If the temple ordered by the censors in 179 was actually built (we hear nothing more about it in our sources), it must have had a short life: five years later the next pair of censors, Quintus Fulvius Flaccus and Aulus Postumius Albinus, contracted for “a stage to be at the disposal of the aediles and the praetors” (*scaenam aedilibus praetoribusque praebendam*); this stage would have been shared, it seems, by the magistrates who had responsibility for the different festivals (Livy 41.27.5). Where in Rome it would have been built is unknown. Despite the greater efficiency that this plan offered, it too came to naught, possibly because it undermined the tradition of erecting each stage near the temple of the festival’s tutelary deity (Manuwald 2011) or because it nibbled away at the aediles’ and praetors’ control of the process (Gruen 1992).

Twenty years later, in 154, the censors Gaius Cassius Longinus and Marcus Valerius Messalla nearly succeeded in building a stone theater, but a senatorial decree authored by Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica ordered it to be destroyed for the reason (as reported in Livy, *Per.* 48) that a *theatrum* was “useless and potentially injurious to public morals” (*inutile et nociturum publicis moribus*). According to Velleius Paterculus (1.15.3), the theater faced the Palatine from the Lupercal, a cave on the south side of that hill. This is

evidently the same theater that Appian (*B. Civ.* 1.28) tells us was demolished, when it was practically finished, out of fear that it would be a breeding ground for riots or out of the belief that it was “useless for Romans to become fully accustomed to Greek luxuries” (ὁὐ χρήσιμον ὅλως Ἑλληνικαῖς ἡδοναθείαις Ῥωμαίους ἐθίζεσθαι). Appian, however, attributes the building project to a different, similarly named official, Lucius Cassius Longinus, who was consul in 107. If Appian was not merely mixing up the two names but, beyond that, was conflating two distinct events, there may have been yet another failed attempt, this one during Lucius’ consulship (North 1992).

In any case, the opposition to a permanent building for staged performances continued, even while the competition to build increasingly elaborate and expensive temporary theaters grew. None of the Roman magistrates had enough clout, or enough ego, to defy the de facto taboo successfully until Pompey, in 61, celebrated his third triumph and began construction in the Campus Martius of his own glorified (and self-glorifying) version of a theater-temple. Rather than build a theater near an existing temple, he created both a brand-new temple (to Venus Victrix) and a theater integrated with it. Behind the stage building he planted a rectangular formal garden, and at the back of the colonnade lining the garden he added a senate meeting-room (*curia*), architecturally balancing the temple. Thus the whole complex, made entirely of stone and concrete, could claim to be devoted to serious, heavyweight matters – religion and government – even with a “useless” theater in the middle of it (Stamper 2005). Still fearful of being condemned by the censors, though, Pompey avoided calling the structure a theater; at the dedication in 55, he declared (on the authority of Tertullian, *De spectaculis* 10.5) that it was not a theater but a temple “to which we have added steps of (= for) the spectacles” (*cui subiecimus gradus spectaculorum*). Since the word *spectaculum* in the plural can signify either the shows that the spectators watch or the bleachers on which the spectators sit, Pompey’s phrase *gradus spectaculorum* is tellingly ambiguous: in a theatrical context the words could mean simply “tiers of bleachers”; when they are applied to a temple, however, they become “spectacular steps” as well.

Those who opposed having a theater building on long-term display in Rome were less concerned about the permanent presence of a stage than about the permanent presence of a seating area for the audience; at least that is the impression conveyed to us by our literary sources. The very act of sitting, as opposed to standing, could have moral implications and be viewed as un-Roman. Cicero, for example, in *Pro Flacco* 16, criticizes the Greek states for holding their public deliberations in theaters, where administrative decisions are made “through the recklessness of an assembly that sits” (*sedentis contionis temeritate*). A passage from Tacitus suggests that a transition took place in Rome from a standing audience to a sitting one: at *Annales* 14.20 people upset with Nero’s establishment of a Greek-style quadrennial theater festival at Rome recall that in earlier times it was customary for the games to be produced “with quickly assembled steps and a stage constructed for the occasion” (*subitariis gradibus et scaena in tempus structa*) and that, even further back in history, “the people watched while standing” (*stantem populum spectavisse*) so as not to waste whole days in idleness. It is clear from several passages in Plautus, however, that seating of some sort, though not necessarily enough of it to satisfy everyone who wanted a seat, had become the norm by the end of the third century (Moore 1995). At *Poenulus* 5, to cite just one example, the prologue-speaker commands the spectators to “sit contentedly on

the benches” (*bonoque ut animo sedeant in subselliis*). Further evidence comes from a statement Livy appends to his story of the theater destruction in 154: “and the people watched the games standing, for some time [afterward]” (*populusque aliquamdiu stans ludos spectavit*). This comment may be related to a senatorial decree, preserved by Valerius Maximus (*Facta et dicta memorabilia* 2.4.2), that prohibited anyone from setting up benches (*subsellia*) in or near Rome “or from wishing to watch the games while seated” (*sedensve ludos spectare vellet*); according to Valerius, its aim was to ensure that even while Romans were relaxing at the theater, they would have “a virile stance appropriate for the Roman nation” (*standi virilitas propria Romanae gentis*). We do not know how long the decree was in effect, but it testifies not only to how concerned the senators were with the public image that they and their society projected, but also to how wary they were of the potential for sit-down, Greek-style theater to undermine Roman identity and values (Bell 2004; Sear 2006).

The Appeal of Temporary Wooden Theaters

Still other factors may have disposed the Romans to preserve their routine of annual contracts for theater facilities. Their scrupulousness about religious observances, for instance, may have made them reluctant to change a ritual without first receiving divine sanction, and their fear of having any one man achieve permanent power, reflected in the one-year term limits characteristic of their political system, may have inclined them to view the yearly dismantling of the stages not as a colossal waste of time and effort, but as a prudent and effective means of keeping personal prestige and acclaim within reasonable limits (Manuwald 2011). Finally, we should not overlook the sheer pleasure that the community may have derived from this tradition. Rivalry was inherent in Roman festivals (it is implicit in the word *ludi*), and the competition to produce new, more ingenious, more fancifully decorated stages each year may have been so enjoyable that the population at large, not just the elites, would have been sorry to see it go. (Vitr. *De arch.* 5.5.7 attests that the building of temporary stages continued even after Pompey’s theater had been built.) A modern parallel might be the excitement and competitive spirit generated annually among the krewes in New Orleans, or among the samba schools in Rio de Janeiro, over the construction of floats for their parades during Carnival season.

Plautus’s own plays feature building and rebuilding as themes or plot elements. A prime example is Philolaches’ *canticum* in *Mostellaria* (84–156), in which he likens himself to a well-built house. All who see it want a similar one and spare no expense in copying it; if the owner neglects it, however, it falls apart, and (117) “the whole house is rebuilt from scratch” (*aedificantur aedes totae denuo*). In *Miles Gloriosus* the slave Palaestrio is obviously proud of his carpentry skills: all he has done is made a hole in the wall, enabling Pleusicles and Philocomasium to pass unseen between the two houses, yet he boasts to the audience about the “great devices” (*magnas machinas*) he has prepared (138). Dangerous construction can be a topic of conversation, too: at *Curculio* 645–647 Planesium recalls a terrifying incident from her childhood, when she and her nurse Archestrata had gone to a festival of Dionysus:

She had taken me to watch a show during the Dionysia.
 Right after we had arrived there and she had situated me,
 A whirling wind began to blow, then the bleachers collapsed.

*ea me spectatum tulerat per Dionysia.
 postquam illo uentum est, iam, ut me collocauerat,
 exoritur uentus turbo, spectacula ibi ruunt.*

Presumably the Dionysia to which Planesium refers occurred in Athens or another Greek locale; even so, the words could still have resonated with Roman spectators, either because they were familiar with the precariousness of their own bleachers on a windy day or – just the opposite – because they were certain that Roman *spectacula* would never be so flimsily built as Greek ones. Either interpretation would attest to Plautus’s skill at breaking down the barriers between the world in which the audience lived and the world manufactured by the actors on the stage.

In the early years of Roman drama, putting up a wooden *scaena* or *proscenium* (Plautus uses both words to refer to the stage) was sufficient to repurpose an area, converting it into a venue for “scenic” entertainments (Manuwald 2011). Where the spectators were to stand or sit, how comfortable and safe they would be, and how well they would be able to see the stage and hear the masked actors must all have been important considerations. Up until about 30 years ago, it was widely assumed that Plautus was writing his plays for a huge, rowdy audience of easily distracted people. Since then, many scholars have changed their opinion. Archeological finds and fresh assessments of the evidence have convinced them that the first audiences for Plautus’s plays were relatively small, and that the majority of the spectators were attentive and well educated. We know, for example, from a fragmentary production notice (*didascalia*) that *Pseudolus* was performed at the dedication of the Magna Mater temple in 191, and Cicero (*Har resp.* 24) informs us that the *Ludi Megalenses* were originally celebrated “in the very sight of the Magna Mater” (*in ipso Matris magnae conspectu*), implying right in front of her temple. The work of archeologists has confirmed, however, that the space there would not have been sufficient for both a stage and bleachers. Thus the audience must have sat on the wide and high steps of the temple or stood on its podium or on the podium of the neighboring Temple of Victory; the maximum capacity of the venue was probably under 2000 (Goldberg 1988).

The metatheatrical speech by the *choragus* in *Curculio* 462–486 takes the spectators on a selective tour of the Roman Forum, beginning with the *comitium*, a concave area at the foot of the Capitoline Hill used for assemblies. On the basis of this evidence, the first performance of that play may have taken place just south of the *comitium*; the stage could have been aligned so that the actors faced east and looked out over the forum, where spectators could have watched the play not just from bleachers but from balconies and other vantage points too, including some of the very sites mentioned by the *choragus* (Moore 1998). The scaffolding could have been stored elsewhere and transported to the forum only when it was time to reassemble it for the upcoming *ludi scaenici*; this would be similar to the process hypothesized by Welch (2007) for the construction of a temporary wooden amphitheater to accommodate the spectators of gladiatorial games held in the forum. Another option would have been to make use of existing structures: by then, the *comitium* had probably been outfitted with low, curved steps that would have provided, if not room for a

grandstand, at least a grand spot for standing, since that was where the Romans customarily gathered to hear political speeches (Hanson 1959). There was also a speaker's platform (*rostra*) that could have been pressed into service as part of a stage building; the spectators, then, and not the actors, would have faced east and had the best view of the locations described by the *choragus* (Marshall 2006). This second scenario assumes that the actors would have been performing for a much smaller crowd, packed close to the stage. In either case it would have been impossible for the spectators to lose sight (literally) of the fact that they were still in Rome. To judge from the speech by the *choragus*, Plautus's audience was within viewing distance of a number of impressive public buildings (e.g. the shrine of Cloacina, the basilica, and the Temple of Castor). The playwright could acknowledge this cityscape and use it as fodder for jokes, as in *Curculio*, or he could ignore it and try to preserve the dramatic illusion of being in some remote Greek locale. Even if he chose to ignore it, however, the material reality of Rome would never be far from the eyes of the spectators.

The Comic Potential of the *Cavea*

While the soaring *theātron* was the defining part of an ancient Greek theater, so much so that its name came to be applied to the whole structure, the corresponding part of a Roman theater had a name, *cavea* ("cage"), that left undefined even the nature of the activity that went on within it. We can get an idea of what the word would have connoted to Plautus's audiences from its comic use by Lyco the banker as he reacts to the incredibly long list of nations that Curculio claims were subdued in just 20 days by Therapontigonus Platagidorus (*Curc.* 449–451): "even if they'd been confined in a coop, just as little chicks are, they wouldn't have been able to be circumambulated in one year" (*in cavea si forent / conclusi, itidem ut pulli gallinacei, / ita non potuere uno anno circumirier*). It could increase the humor here if the spectators felt that they too were "cooped up" in the *cavea*. By the first century, the seating area had protective grilles (*cancelli*) as well, and people were so familiar with them that Varro (*Rust.* 3.5.4) could liken the latticework inside an aviary to them and expect his readers to understand the analogy. From Cicero (*Har. Resp.* 22) we have dramatic testimony that the *cavea* of the temporary theater was still a claustrophobic place in 56: during the *Ludi Megalenses* of that year Clodius arranged for a gang of slaves to burst in on the stage and make an assault on the unsuspecting senators and Roman people, who were "held fast by the seated audience itself and hindered by the benches and impeded by the mob and narrow space" (*vinctum ipso consessu et constrictum spectaculis atque impeditum turba et angustii*).

The *cavea* is not likely to have been any roomier 150 years earlier, yet small-scale invasions of the spectators' space were already happening in the time of Plautus. The prologue-speaker of *Poenulus* adds the command (19–20), "nor should the usher walk past [anyone's] face / nor should he lead [anyone] to sit, while an actor is on stage" (*neu dissignator praeter os obambulet / neu sessum ducat, dum histrio in scaena siet*). This is the earliest reference we have to a *dissignator*, an official who, in the late Republican period, was much more than an usher: he helped organize the theatrical and gladiatorial games and directed funerals (Bond 2016). Perhaps his original job was to escort dignitaries to

their seats (Moore 1995): at the *Ludi Romani* of 194 the censors had ordered the curule aediles to reserve a section of seats for the senators, causing people to grumble about the audacity of changing a tradition of mingled (*in promiscuo*) seating that had lasted 558 years (Livy 34.54.6). While the passage from *Poenulus* leaves us in the dark about whether all attendees or just the senators had to be conducted to their seats, it does indicate that walking between the rows of spectators during a performance was possible, even if annoying to the audience. Jupiter's command (reported by Mercury at *Amph.* 65–66) “that inspectors go among the individual benches, to the spectators throughout the whole *cavea*” (*ut conquistores singula in subsellia / eant per totam caveam spectatoribus*) suggests that such incursions into the *cavea* were commonplace and that those sitting there watching a show might even have expected to have their peace and quiet disturbed by “intruders” of various sorts.

The text of *Stichus* may contain an example of humor enhanced by the close quarters in the *cavea*: when Antipho's daughters are fussing over their father, and the unnamed daughter invites him to sit down in a particular spot, he replies (93): “I'm not sitting there, you two sit there; I'll take my seat on a bench” (*non sedeo istic, vos sedete; ego sedero in subsellio*). Daughter Panegyris immediately exclaims (94), “Wait for the cushion!” (*mane pulvinum*), and the sisters spend two lines propping up their dad with unwanted pillows. The actor playing Antipho might have earned a laugh by quickly attempting to leave the stage and sit down on a bench with the spectators. In *Aulularia* the actor playing Euclio theoretically has plenty of time to leave the stage and wander through the *cavea* as he sings mournfully about the loss of his pot of gold, accusing the spectators of being thieves who “sit there pretending to be honorable” (*sedent quasi sint frugi*, 717). Perhaps the *tibicen*, who apparently could position himself either on the stage or in front of it (Moore 2012), would have had the freedom to tag along with Euclio and maintain his musical accompaniment in the midst of the audience. At *Truculentus* 931 Phronesium recalls “a remark that an actor made in the *cavea*” (*quod verbum in cavea dixit histrio*). Even if scholars are right in arguing that *cavea* must here refer to the whole theater, including the stage, and that the line therefore offers no proof that actors ever left the stage during a performance, it is still conceivable that they did, whenever the intimate size of the venue and the accessible design of the stage furnished the opportunity (Marshall 2006).

Visualizing the Stage and the Performers

Given the long shelf life that temporary stages enjoyed in Rome, and their apparent appeal to the public, it is ironic that we know so little about what they looked like. We have no physical remains of them, nor any contemporary literary source except Plautus himself, and he takes it for granted that the audience will have the stage in sight and will not need to have it described. All we can say with confidence is that a stage employed for multiple entertainments during a festival would have had to be versatile; thus it probably had a generic *scaenae frons* (stage facade) that was realistic enough that it could be understood by the spectators – with the help of the actors' power of suggestion – as the image of a particular locale (Beacham 1991; Marshall 2006). The setting for nearly every one of the

plays is a street in a Greek city; even the action in *Rudens*, whose plot involves shipwrecks on the coast of Africa, does not take place on the beach but in the outskirts of the city of Cyrene, in front of Daemones' villa and the shrine of Venus. Although there are references to altars in many of the plays, in only two, *Mostellaria* and *Rudens*, is it essential to have an altar to which a character can cling for refuge. There is also no need for sets that open up and reveal interiors, since Plautus relocates activities that in real life would occur indoors to the street. The *scaenae frons* was probably a wall with three openings, each functioning as the doorway of a house or a shrine. If the plot called for just one or two houses to be used for entrances and exits, extraneous house-fronts could have been ignored, or one of the houses might have been presented as luxurious enough to have two or even three doorways of its own. (This would suit the palace in *Amphitruo*, which is also unique in needing to have a roof that Mercury can stand on.) The doors themselves could have been canvas boards painted to resemble real doors, or they could have been nothing more than curtains. Characters in Plautus frequently announce that they are knocking on a door or that they hear its hinges or bolts creaking; if a stage-door in fact had no means of creaking or making a loud sound when struck, comments about its noisiness could have been humorous as well as practical: they would not only have given notice of entrances and exits, but would also have been amusingly disconnected from what the audience was actually hearing from the door: nothing!

This example demonstrates the danger inherent in relying on the text of Plautus for "factual" information: characters' descriptions, even if they sound straightforward, need not have been accurate reflections of what the audience heard or saw. The humor in *Mostellaria* 817–831, for instance, as Theopropides and Simo examine the exterior of Simo's house, unaware that Tranio is ridiculing them, does not require that the forecourt (*vestibulum*) and walkway (*ambulacrum*) be visible or that the doorposts be constructed with firmness (*firmitate*) and thickness (*crassitudine*) or that the seams in the doors (*coagmenta in foribus*) look the way Tranio portrays them; indeed, the less architectural detail there is on stage for the two old men to see, the funnier are comments such as Theopropides's at 831: "the more I behold each thing, the more I'm pleased" (*ut quicquid magis contemplor, tanto magis placet*). The amusement here, as in so many other Plautine scenes, comes primarily from the actors' banter: the subtlety of the wordplay, the double entendres, the bilingual, Latin/Greek puns (Fontaine 2010). If the draw for the original audience was more verbal than visual, then even a bare stage, with no formal set at all, might have sufficed. Signage would certainly not have been needed to make the spectators believe that a certain exit led to the city or to the harbor or to the countryside.

Even so, the desire to find out more about the appearance of the earliest Plautine stages has motivated scholars to go hunting for clues in artwork that predates Plautus. Staged performances are represented on more than a hundred fourth-century red-figure vases from locations in Sicily and Magna Graecia, particularly Apulia. The pots are decorated with images of actors performing on a platform that is supported by posts and reached by a ladder-like flight of six to eight steps. The wall at the back of this stage may have in it a window or a front or side view of a doorway, depicted sometimes as having a small projecting roof, sometimes as having two door panels that open inwardly; drapery may hang in swags from the stage. Actors are shown not only standing on the stage but also looking toward it and climbing up onto it; they wear short tunics, a phallus, tights, padding, and

masks with caricatured features. These intriguing vases were once thought to illustrate *phlyakes*, farcical skits indigenous to southern Italy, before the genre had evolved from improvisational to scripted. It now seems clear, however, that the scenes chosen come from the plays of Aristophanes and other writers of Greek Old Comedy and were performed either by traveling troupes from Athens or by local actors who adapted the Attic comedies to suit a performance venue very different from the Greek-style theater for which they had been written (Taplin 1993; Csapo and Slater 1995). While the vases give us precious artistic renderings of the temporary stages that were popular in Greek-speaking regions of Italy a century before Plautus was born, there is no way of proving that they were the ancestors, either directly or indirectly, of the stages used in Rome during Plautus's lifetime.

Nor can we know whether the costumes and masks that the actors on the vases wear have any relation to the ones Plautine actors would have worn. Presumably the costumes of Plautus's actors would have been Greek, not Roman, in style, but nothing can be concluded from the name *fabula palliata* ("drama wearing a *pallium*"): the term was not even coined until the first century, and it implies only that the genre itself was figuratively dressed like a Greek (Manuwald 2011). In the face of conflicting evidence about the use of masks, the most reasonable guess seems to be that Plautus followed the tradition of Greek New Comedy and did indeed have his actors wear them. Dordalus's curse at *Persa* 783–784, with its pun on the word *personas*, is funnier if the joke is metatheatrical (Slater 1985), calling attention to the fact that the characters are actors wearing masks: "may all the gods destroy that Persian, and destroy all the Persians too, and in addition all the – persound-ians!" (*qui illum Persam atque omnis Persas atque etiam omnis personas / male di omnes perdant!*). The power of masks to convey and stir up emotion (Marshall 2006) would have been especially keen in the intimacy of the early Roman theater venues. Plautus's masks were probably modeled on the Greek masks that we see today in the many surviving Hellenistic and Roman wall-paintings and mosaics that illustrate performances of Menander's comedies. It makes sense that Plautus would have kept his characters, their attire, and their dramatic setting as Greek as possible, in order to accentuate the incongruity of having Greeks in distant Greek lands speaking in Latin and inserting commentary on the current state of affairs in Rome. Much of the humor of this contrast would have been lost if Plautus had borrowed masks familiar to his audience from the *fabula Atellana* or from the drama depicted on the vases from southern Italy, or if he had invented a hybrid version combining Greek and Italian features (Petrides 2014).

Scholars have also developed theories based on artwork that postdates Plautus. Wealthy Romans residing on the Bay of Naples two hundred years after Plautus's death were fond of bringing the theater figuratively into their homes by having brightly colored stage facades painted on the walls of their villas. Vitruvius (*De arch.* 7.5.1–2) regards this practice as a middle stage in a gradual development of illusionistic wall-painting from imitation of inlaid marbles and architectural features to representations of landscapes, gods, and "ordered layouts of stories" (*fabularum dispositas explicationes*), i.e. sequences of scenes from fictional literature or myth. While Vitruvius may be absolutely correct about the evolution of wall decoration in Roman houses, and while the frescoes from Pompeii and Herculaneum have inspired the creation of beautiful sets for modern performances of Plautus's comedies and have even been analyzed and reconstructed with the aid of

three-dimensional computer modeling (Beacham 2007), they are nonetheless unreliable evidence for the appearance of the stage during Plautus's career.

There is a similar problem with extrapolating backward from anecdotes about the lavish temporary theaters that were built at great expense by Roman magistrates during the first century. Valerius Maximus (2.4.6), for example, lists some of the most amazing embellishments, from encasing the whole stage in silver, gold, or ivory to making it revolve. He also informs us that Quintus Catulus in 69 first sheltered the mass of spectators from the glare of the sun with "shades made of linen sheets" (*velorum umbraculis*) and that Claudius Pulcher in 99 "shaded with a variety of colors" (*varietate colorum adumbravit*) a stage "that formerly had been constructed of panels that had no painted picture" (*vacuis ante pictura tabulis extentam*); according to Pliny the Elder (*HN* 35.23), this set so fooled the crows with its verisimilitude that they flew toward the image of the roof tiles, ready to land on them. These passages presuppose that stage decoration evolved from colorless to colorful, or at least from monochrome to polychrome, and that the shading of the stage with various tints, as well as the shading of the audience from the sun, did not happen until the first century. Yet awnings of some sort are not out of the question for the late third century, given the small size of the original venues for Plautus's plays; from Livy's statement (27.36.8) that in 208 "the *comitium* was covered" (*comitium tectum esse*) we gather that overhead protection for assemblies was already an important matter during the Second Punic War. Moreover, the public's familiarity with Greek paintings and statues, which were being seized as spoils and transported to Rome in large quantity at his time (Gruen 1992), may have encouraged the use of portable Greek *objets d'art*, or at least facsimiles of them, whenever the multipurpose stage had to be "Hellenized" for *fabula palliata* performances. Menaechmus' joke at *Menaechmi* 143 ("have you ever seen a painted panel on a wall?" *enumquam tu vidisti tabulam pictam in pariete*) would have had an added twist if just such a painting had been incorporated in the set, and the insulting of a slave by calling him a "statue fit for flogging" (*statua verberea*, *Capt.* 951; *Pseud.* 911) might have conveyed even more menace if there had been a Greek statue, itself a recent captive of the Romans, visible on the stage. A statue could have had multiple theatrical uses, including serving as convenient "furniture" behind which an actor might choose to hide while eavesdropping on a conversation – a favorite activity of Plautine characters. Of course, this brings us back to the basic dilemma: even if we can make a good case for the versatility of a particular piece of scenery or the usefulness of an awning at an outdoor production or the attractiveness of a particular style of wall-painting, we cannot prove that any of those means of pleasing the audience, and assisting the actors, were employed during the decades when Plautus's plays were first staged.

The Aural Dimension of a Performance

With regard to two of the most crucial features for a play's success in 200, namely, the actors' delivery of their lines and the sound of the *tibicen's* music, we wish we knew more. There is no doubt that the actors, whether masked or not, would have needed the ability to project their voices: none of the repurposed venues used for the initial performances would have had the remarkable amplifying effect of a Greek hillside theater, with its stone

theatron and open, reflective *orchestra*. Nor would any have had the sophistication of a later, freestanding Roman theater such as Pompey's or the Theater of Marcellus, whose architectural elements – a steeply stepped, semicircular *cavea* reaching to the extended wings of a lofty stage building; a semicircular area in front where senators had their seats (*orchestra*); a low, extremely wide stage (*pulpitum*); and a multi-columned, deeply niched *scaenae frons* – were all integrated into a unified whole, but whose seating arrangement still ensured that the best acoustic experience was reserved for those of senatorial or equestrian rank (Rose 2005). The Greek theaters and the later Roman theaters, although they had fundamental differences in form, were both essentially enclosures that kept the noises of the real world at a distance and prevented them from intruding on performances. Not so the first venues for Plautus's plays. It would have been hard for the spectators, even if tucked away in a corner of the forum or squeezed in between temples on the Palatine, to be oblivious to the competing sounds (as well as the sights and powerful aromas) of the festival day. And even in an era before cell phones, senators in the audience might have felt irresponsible if they did not keep one of their ears always on the alert for any situation that might arise and require their personal intervention. How loudly the actors would have been forced to speak in order to be heard may be hinted at by how often the texts of Plautus mention shouting, both on stage and from backstage (*Aul.* 38): “but now this old geezer inside the house is hollering, the way he usually does” (*sed hic senex iam clamat intus ut solet*).

Compounding the challenge for the actors would have been the formidable musical demands placed upon them. In Plautus's adaptations of Greek New Comedy, singing is the dominant mode of communication. With the elimination of the chorus and choral interludes, which would have offered the actors' voices a periodic rest while also realistically signaling the passage of time in the plot, the only relief comes from passages of spoken, unaccompanied iambic senarii (*deverbia*). These function as stretches of relative calm in the stream of emotional *cantica* whose assorted meters fill two-thirds of Plautus's pages. Any actor singing or chanting at full volume above the piercing tones of the *tibia* and performing the dances and other physical antics called for by the text (including rapid exits and entrances), all while striving to enunciate the clever words that the audience was eager to hear, would have had to be athletic and have tremendous stamina (Moore 2012). Plautus's habit of violating the “three-actor rule” of Greek New Comedy and adding a fourth, fifth, or even sixth concurrent speaker to an important, lively scene (Franko 2004) may have been prompted by the desire not just to make it even livelier and more memorable but also to spread the singing duties around among members of the troupe and lessen the strain on individual actors.

Conclusion

While there is little we can conclude with certainty, it seems safe to say that what happened on the original Plautine stage was far more consequential than the design of the stage itself. For the ancient Greeks, the striking architecture of their theaters and the panoramic view from the top rows were among the delights of attending dramatic performances. In contrast, it appears to have been the very ordinariness of the temporary wooden stages in

Rome that delighted those who came to the debuts of Plautus's plays. It may even have been the un-Greek proximity of the audience to the stage during *ludi scaenici* that made the spectators – at least the elite among them – feel happy to be Romans, conspicuously different from the Greeks, even as they watched non-Roman actors transforming what had been Greek scripts into Latin and marveled, not at the wonders of nature, but at the newly dedicated temples of the forum towering nearby.

FURTHER READING

Three comprehensive studies, which include sections devoted to the stages and stagecraft of Plautus, are old but still worth reading: Bieber (1961); Beare (1964); and Duckworth (1994). For a recent analysis of the Greeks' and Romans' different experiences of drama, related to their different theatrical spaces and performance contexts, see Rehm (2016). Post-Plautine theaters (and amphitheaters) in Rome are treated in Davison (2000) and W. Slater (1996). For an up-to-date survey of the evidence from Greek vase-paintings and mosaics, which may or may not have bearing on the original staging and costuming of Plautus's plays, see Green (2016).

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CHAPTER FOUR

Actors and Audience

Isabella Tardin Cardoso

When an actor tears off his mask, makeup is sure to be forthcoming.
(Jakobson 1987, p. 370)

In Roman comedy, references to the actors and spectators sometimes appear, as may be expected, in prologues and epilogues; sometimes, however, these metapoetic references appear in the plays-within-the-play that Plautus frequently uses to dramatize a deceptive plan by a given character. On these occasions, although he does not “tear off the mask” of his actors or depict the public in a realistic way, the dramatist selects and stylizes certain aspects of life and of the behavior of the actors and spectators of his time. This chapter explores the images of actor and audience that Plautine comedy evokes by considering its “poetics of deception” (Petron 1983) and the metatheatrical resources associated with it (Barchiesi 1969; Slater 1985; Moore 1998). Discussion of selected passages in Plautus, supplemented by some later material, will illustrate the impact that references to the production and reception of comedy have on dramatic and, as I argue, metadramatic illusion (Cardoso 2010, 2011), an illusion that affects not only potential modern performances but also the interpretation and edition of the texts.

The prologue to *Asinaria* refers both to its playwright, who “adapted it into a barbarian language” (11), and to the team of performing artists and other people involved in the production of the comedies offered at the Roman festivals of his day:

Please pay attention, spectators, right now. May this business turn out (*vortat*) well for me and you, and for this here troupe (*gregi*), our managers (*dominis*), and hirers (*conductoribus*). Now you, herald, make the whole crowd all ears.

The troupe (*grex*) included those who acted on stage, which means the actors (usually referred to as *histriones*, *cantores*, or *artifices*) and probably musicians (namely *tibicines*,

“pipers”). Additionally, in the verses quoted above, we recognize some activities that seem similar to those performed behind the scenes in theatrical productions today. The speaker mentions those responsible for hiring the troupe (*conductores*, 3) and the leaders of the troupe (*domini gregis*, 3). In other comedies, we find more direct mentions of actor-managers or producers (*actor*, *Bacch.* 213), as well as costume suppliers (*choragus*, *Per.* 159, *Trin.* 858). In order to assist with the presentation, there were also those responsible for maintaining order in the theater, whether by voice, which was the herald’s role (*praeco*, *Asin.* 4; *Poen.* 11), by inspecting the audience more directly (*conquistores*, *Amph.* 65), or by designating their seats (*dissignator*, *Poen.* 19). In addition, references abound to another element essential for a spectacle: the audience (*spectatores*, *Asin.* 1), whose presence at and importance for the success of the show are often stressed in Plautine comedies.

Passages such as these are even more crucial when we consider the scarcity of archeological and textual evidence more directly concerning the theatrical context of the *ludi scaenici* of Plautus’s time. Although it is logical to imagine that, decades later, the production and reception conditions of Roman comedy would be similar (Moore 1998), the way in which Terence’s plays present their actors and address the spectators indicates some significant changes (Beare 1964; Slater 1992). A consistent study of the issue is still lacking, but the presumable differences between consecutive generations of performing artists, audiences, and sponsors of Roman theater prevent us from assuming a priori that later evidence would answer certain questions that Plautus’s work leaves unresolved.

The titles and responsibilities of the persons entrusted with theater tasks are often not clearly or consistently defined, rendering any lengthy discussion of details inconclusive. In part, the imprecision comes from the lack of consistency in the references themselves. In contrast with the records kept in Athens, there were no official records of the plays and the production teams for Roman festivals, and unlike Terence’s scripts, only two Plautine scripts (*Stichus* and *Pseudolus*) are accompanied by *didascaliae* (“production notes”), which were written after Plautus’s time (Petersmann 1973).

In Plautine texts, the references to actors and audience are more than mere descriptions of theater-related activities; they are often jokes within the comedy itself. Moreover, in comic verses, many of the terms are registered for the first time in Latin. In many cases the terms seem to be used figuratively, and only later were some of them integrated as technical terminology of the performing arts. If we look closer, the term “inspector” of the spectators (*conquistor*) also denotes a recruiting officer in a military context (*Mer.* 665; *Cic. Mil.* 67), and *dissignator* (allegedly the one responsible for the seats) in later texts indicates an official master of ceremonies at funerals (*Hor. Ep.* 1.7.6; *Sen. Ben.* 6.38.4). Many terms come from a less-than-urbane context, such as cattle raising: the *grex* (“troupe”) and its leader (*dominus gregis*) designate, literally, an assembly of animals (like a flock or herd) and the owner of those animals. Even the *actor*, in the proper (although seldom-registered) sense, was originally “he who guides the flock” (*ThLL* 1, cf. also the verb *agere*). On the other hand, *caterua*, which designates, in some of the Plautine manuscripts, the actors that announce the end of the play, also in a pejorative sense denotes a “band of armed men” (*OLD* 2) who acted in the city of Rome, and its meaning as an “assembly of animals” (a flock, a herd) seems to be metaphorical (*OLD* 3).

But what could all this mean in the context of Plautine theater? Regarding *dominus gregis*, recorded in a theatrical context only in the *Asinaria* prologue, one wonders

whether, in addition to facilitating a joke with the assembly of animals evoked in the title (“The Comedy of Asses”), the expression signified a figure not unlike a modern theater director in charge of the artistic aspects of the production, or a middleman (between Plautus and the producer) who perhaps sold the play. With these possibilities in mind, some scholars either suggest a post-Plautine change in the text of *Asinaria* or follow the conjecture of Camerarius in adopting the singular dative (*domino*) instead of the form transmitted by the manuscripts (*dominis*; Hurka 2010). Other scholars, believing that the *domini* were the owners of the slave actors, defend the transmitted plural (Brown 2002, p. 235).

Was the piper (*tibicen*) indicated in the production note of *Stichus* the composer, the performer, or both? Does *conductor* (literally “one who employs a person for wages, a hirer,” *OLD* 1) allude metaphorically to the magistrates financing the festivals (Brown 2002, p. 235) or refer more directly to private individuals responsible for the casting? Similarly, it is not known whether the herald (*praeco*) was a functionary of the festival (Marshall 2006, p. 31) or a member of the *grex* who performed the task (Beare 1964, p. 169). In Plautus and Latin texts generally, with the exception of Terence, actors normally were referred to by *histriones* and its cognate terms (*Amph.* 69, 77, 82, 87, 91 cf. *facere histrionam*, 99, 152; *Poen.* 20, *histricus* 4, 44; *Capt.* 13; *Truc.* 931). The meaning of *actor* in Plautus’s *Bacchides* is unclear when the scheming slave, Chrysalus, complains:

It’s not the affair but the actor (*actor*) that hurts my heart with disgust. Even *Epidicus*, a play that I love as much as myself, there’s none I watch as unwillingly if Pellio is acting (*agit*) in it. (213–215)

Spectators and readers, including scholars, cannot help but wonder at these verses, which not only stretch the dramatic illusion to the limit but also include the only Plautine use of *actor*; it is, in fact, the first recorded use of the term in Latin (*ThLL* s.v.). Furthermore, the play’s content predicts the possibility of revivals and its staging by other producers, an idea that would go against some traditional views. Based on these dramatic, linguistic, and historical premises, certain scholars have argued against the Plautine authorship of the verses and considered them to be a product of *retractationes*: ad hoc changes made by performing artists in their shows in later time periods (Zwierlein 1992, pp. 199–216; Deufert 2002, pp. 24–25). Others have sought to relate this reference to the original performance, attempting to recognize the actor (perhaps Pellio, or even Plautus himself; see below) behind the character masks (Barsby 1986, pp. 115–116).

The name Pellio reappears twice more in Plautine manuscripts: the fifth line of the *Stichus didascalía* mentions a Titus Publilius Pellio, presumably as *actor*. More provocatively, a scene in *Menaechmi* refers to “the stage material of Pellio” – if we understand a proper noun in the expression *suppelex Pellionis* in *Menaechmi* 404 (thus Turnebus 1604; Gratwick 1993, pp. 178–179; de Melo 2011), as opposed to the most common reading *suppelex pellionis* (“a furrier’s furniture” in Nixon’s 1998 translation). The expression comes in the voice of a male character who, trying to convince a prostitute that he is not his twin brother, explains that he has just come into town on a ship, which he describes as follows: “A wooden one, often battered, often pierced, often shaken by the mallet; just like the stage material of Pellio [*suppelex Pellionis*], stake next to stake” (402–404, trans. de Melo). In this cryptic nautical speech, a metatheatrical joke involving the actor’s name

suits the vocabulary of deception, for the woman impatiently reacts. Again, the reference to spectacle is clear in de Melo's translation: "Please, stop playing the clown [*ludos facere*] now and come with me this way" (*Men.* 405; *ludos facere*: "to perform a play"/ "to make a fool of someone," *OLD ludus* 3, 4). If all three passages speak of the same Pellio, the term *actor* could cover the actor himself (perhaps the lead actor, Zucchelli 1964; Beare 1964) as well as the actor's manager or agent, who would also be the producer of the show (Petersmann 1973; Gratwick 1982, p. 80, n. 3, Gratwick 1993, p. 178). Similarly, in the Terentian prologues the *actor* (*Haut.* 4–6, 36; *Hec.* 18, 30, 33) states that, in addition to rehearsing and performing in the comedies, he bought plays and sold them to the magistrates (*Hec.* 57, *Eum.* 20). In short, the meaning of the reference to the *actor* Pellio in *Bacchides* remains an enigma (Cardoso 2019).

In addition to mere imprecision in terminology, it is likely that, in practice, certain responsibilities held by performing artists tended to vary, accumulate, or be shared in the context of the *fabula palliata* (as tends to happen even today, depending on the circumstances of theatrical productions). The way Plautine comedy is self-represented also reinforces this impression: in the plays-within-the-play staged in Plautine comedy, the characters often behave as playwright, directors, and actors of their own deceptive plans, as the cunning slave Chrysalus himself does more than once in *Bacchides* (Slater 1985; Barsby 1986, 2001).

Miles Gloriosus offers another example of this accumulation of responsibilities when the cunning slave Palaestrio not only devises plots (Barchiesi 1969), but also hires a prostitute to act as an adulterous matron, with the help of her maid. Like a "regisseur," the slave continues to instruct them in the roles to be learned (790–793; 795; 807) and insists on rehearsing to perfection (874–895); furthermore, when following his plans and directions, other characters deceive the braggart soldier, and Palaestrio sets aside his role of internal spectator to play an improvised role in this simulation (1346–1348; Frangoulidis 1994, p. 82). In *Trinummus*, the responsibilities for the performance are divided: in this case it is up to the character of an old man (*senex*) to elaborate the deceptive plan and, once he obtains the costumes from the wardrobe manager (*choragus*, *Trin.* 858), the same old man is to act directly as "hirer" (*conductor* 856) of a sycophant, who will disguise himself and, unsuccessfully, try to play the role of a messenger (843–997). In all of these moments, both glory and fiasco bring much laughter; yet in the absence of a clear conception of the dynamics of the troupe in Rome at this time, it is still not possible to confirm the extent to which this image of deception dramatized through the delegation of tasks represents comic exaggeration.

The poetic playfulness of Plautine diction does not always satisfy the modern desire for historical precision. In the reference to *dominus gregis* in *Asinaria* (3), we saw that assumptions regarding the history of Roman theater may interfere in the edition of the transmitted text. Although the reading now preferred is *Pellio* as a proper name (instead of *pellio*) in *Menaechmi* (404) also attests to how our conceptions of performance affect the form of the text, and vice versa. In the verses referring to the *actor* Pellio in *Bacchides* (213), the allure of this theatrical reference often makes us forget that the utterance makes sense within the plot of the play. In the scene, Pellio is mentioned by a scheming slave who does not tolerate clichés (cf. *Bacch.* 1073), and who judges as a poor *actor* another character, the prostitute Bacchis in the role of a young woman in love (Cardoso 2019). In all of these

cases, we perceive a disruption in the dramatic illusion, which Plautus constructs through the mention of his stagecraft and the spectators, and another level of artfulness that, due to its interference in the play and in the image of Roman theater itself, may be understood as “metadramatic illusion” (Cardoso 2010, 2011; see Chapter 16).

Plautine Actors and Their Fans

In Greek and Roman festivals, the interest in the actor (as independent from the play in which he performs) is part of the development of the dramatic arts in general (Slater 1990). Although one must assume that diverse ideas about actors and acting skills may have emerged at the time, there is no comparison with the interest in the private lives of celebrities that exists today (Sharrock 2009, p. 5). Nonetheless, the slave’s speech in *Bacchides* (213–216) indicates that, in Plautus’s era, the Roman public already had its favorite actors and, whether they were masked or not, was fond of recognizing them behind the roles of the characters performed. Plautine metatheater would certainly have benefited if the poet or director, when writing the comedies and distributing the roles among the actors, had taken the identity, appearance, and talent of his stars and supporting actors into account. As attractive as they are, however, modern hypotheses regarding the attributions of roles, for instance to a certain actor or to Plautus himself, remain not only highly speculative but also restricted to the performances in which the same actors continued to play a part (Barsby 1986).

For both the ancient and modern fans of the Roman theater, the study of the elusive Plautine plays leaves much to be desired. Few of Plautus’s performing artists’ names are known. The piper Marcipor (possibly the slave of a certain Oppius) is mentioned in the *didascalia* of *Stichus*, but nothing more is known of him. As for Pellio (literally “a tanner,” OLD *pellio*), the name seems too suitable for a *uorsipellis* (archaism of *uersipellis*, literally a “skin-changer,” i.e. a “costume changer” or skillful actor, as we shall see) not to be a stage name (Cardoso 2019, pp. 20–22). Later references add almost nothing to what is said of him in the plays themselves (Symm. *Ep.* 10.2.1). As for Plautus himself, his undeniable mastery of comic technique using verbal and nonverbal resources makes it clear that the playwright would have had experience with the stage. Taking this into consideration, there is no way to disagree with what Aulus Gellius (3.3.14) tells us: Titus Macc(i)us Plautus, or whoever went by that stage name, would have been co-working with “theatrical artists” (*artifices scaenicorum*), even if that expression did not necessarily comprise the actor’s craft itself.

There is a tendency, however, to assume that Plautus was an actor in his plays. It is in fact plausible that he had a poet–actor career if, believing Livy (7.2.8; see Chapter 1, pp. 17–18), we bear in mind that in the beginning of the theater in Rome, poets like Livius Andronicus acted in their own plays; it is even likelier if we assume that poets and actors belonged to common professional guilds (Festus 33M, Jory 1970; Brown 2002, pp. 226–227). In Plautus’s scripts we find no mentions of these guilds, and it seems significant that, although the figure of the playwright who also acts is frequently evoked in them, Plautus is explicitly mentioned only as a “poet” (*poeta*) – one who adapted Greek writing into Latin (*uortit barbare*, *Trin.* 19; *Asin.* 11) and who decided on the setting and the plot (*Men.* 7–12; *Cas.* 65) – but never specifically as an actor.

Whoever they were, very little is known of the life of the actors at the time of Plautus's plays. In general, not only personal identities, but also the gender, age, and social class of the actors who performed in comedies in Republican Rome remain unclear. The scripts neither prevent nor compel female characters to be represented by men, but because there is no reference to the actors themselves as female, the texts do not discredit Donatus's comment (*ad And.* 4.3.1, line 716), which, seven centuries later, states that both female and male roles in the *fabula palliata* were once played by male actors. If this was the case, the Roman stage would have resembled Athenian and Hellenistic practices. The impression, then, is that the comedic actors would have been part of a troupe made up almost entirely of adult men, and thus some would have specialized in female characters (Marshall 2006). The employment of male actors in the role of women would surely have consequences for the audiences' perception of the work and of the Plautine spectacle as a whole. Casting males in female roles strengthens the hypothesis for the use of masks and can provide amusing visual and meta-dramatic effects. For instance, a grotesque costume could have been employed in the scene in which a pregnant Alcmena appears on stage (*Amph.* 667-680; Christenson 2000, p. 256), and in *Casina*, when the horrified slave tells the spectators about his transvestite marriage, they must have remembered that the bride was not the only cross-dressing person in the play. In broader terms, if women were exclusively represented by men on stage, there would also have been consequences for the impact that the female voice (and the discourse on women) would have had in Plautine comedies (Hunter 1985; Dutsch 2008; Rocha 2015).

It was common for both the birthplace and the social status of the actors in Republican Rome to vary and for their ranks to include slaves, freedmen, and even citizens. A famous example of this coexistence among various social classes on the stage appears in Cicero's first-century BCE exposition of his client, the prestigious actor Quintus Roscius. This Roman citizen, celebrated for his acting in revivals of Plautine comedy, performed alongside his slave, Panurgus, whom the star himself trained (Cic. *QRosc.* 20). If actors of Roman comedy were disbarred from military service, as pointed out by Livy for professional actors in general (7.2.12), or exempted because of their religious importance (Jory 1970; Brown 2002, pp. 227-228), such limitation or privilege would only make sense if the troupe included Roman citizens. In addition, later sources report that actors were or should have been removed from their tribes by the censors (Cic. *Rep.* 4.10), but it is not certain in which epoch they were included in the class of the "inglorious" (*ordo infamis*; cf. Ulpian, Digest 3.2.2.5). Whether it was already legalized in Plautus's times or not, "infamy," among other restrictions, would often have prevented actors (who were influential and probably very good pretenders) from offering legal testimony (Edwards 1994, pp. 123-126, 1997; Duncan 2006, pp. 124-159). Such social restrictions are not clearly stated in Plautine comedy, but one can at least catch a glimpse of self-deprecating jokes. The use of juridical jargon in the staging of perjury, especially with the characters self-interestedly vying with each other (as the sycophant in *Trinummus* and the "counsellors" [*aduocati*] in *Poenulus*), would certainly not have contributed to a more reliable image of the artistic class in a legal context (Petronius 1983; Duncan 2006, pp. 90-123). Furthermore, an awareness of the restrictions on actors' participation in the military may have also been comically exploited by Plautus, particularly at times when his poet-actor characters describe themselves as taking part in a war effort. One blatant example is found in the verses of self-praise (Fraenkel 2007, pp. 165-167) spoken by the slave Chrysalus.

No Pain, No Gain: The Actors' Life Beyond the Stage

"Anyone who made a mistake will get a beating and anyone who made no mistake will get a drink" (*Cist.* 784–785). This speech at the end of the play *Cistellaria* seems to reveal some of the pains and delights of an actor's métier. The reference to the drinking celebration resembles the scene at the close of *Stichus* (762–764), when a piper (who may be or represent the musician of the play: Beare 1964; Moore 2012) is made drunk by slaves at a celebration. A more frequent motif, however, is the menace of punishment. In the prologue of *Amphitruo* (17–37), the fear of taking a beating – this time for failing to secure the attention of the public – is also attributed to actors, the mere mortals who played the roles of the gods Jupiter and Mercury. The sycophant hears a similar threat for his poor "performance" in *Trinummus* (989–990; cf. *Asin.* 946). Undoubtedly, among other consequences, references to such physical punishments generate humorous effects, similarly to the descriptions of abuse that Plautus usually directs at slave characters (McCarthy 2000; Fraenkel 2007, pp. 13, 86). Recognizing the joke, Beare (1964, p. 167), however, rightly points out that "we cannot easily imagine such a remark being made in the theater of Dionysus." It is possible that in Plautus's time such corporal punishments were not restricted to the actors who were slaves but were also part of the restriction of rights that affected Roman citizens who assumed the stage (Cic. *Planc.* 31, 1; Suet., *Aug.* 45.3, *Tib.* 35.2; Edwards 1994, p. 124; Marshall 2006, pp. 87–88).

Though they were probably based on real conditions, mentions of the physical vulnerability of the actors produced not only laughter but also varied dramatic effects. For instance, the mention of a beating alleviates the more arrogant stance by the actor in the prologue of *Amphitruo*, who takes the stage claiming divine and tragic authority. In the prologue of *Poenulus*, the ambivalent status of the actor as a "histrionic commander" (*imperator histicus*, 4) is also a point of departure for the relationship between the stage and audience – if the latter had few expectations about the dramatic genre (Slater 1992) or was already well-informed (Moore 1998).

Something analogous can be said about the references to the actors' poverty. It is likely that at Plautus's time there were already different categories of actors (from stars to unknown artists, from protagonists to supporting actors), and that they did not all earn the same amount (however, see Marshall 2006, pp. 114–120). The sycophant-actor in *Trinummus* (843–844) says that he earns only, as per the title, three coins (*nummi*) to stage his farce – a sum which, in *Bacchides* (649–650), the character-playwright Chrysalus scorns. Financial trouble was a reality for most performing artists, who in general were not paid very well. The plays often expressed the difficult economic situation experienced by performing artists, including poets, as a risk of starvation. A herald is reminded that he works in order to eat (*Poen.* 9–15; cf. *Asin.* 4). In *Rudens* (535), a character complains that he would have to seek work as an actor in other festivals to have something to chew on. Adding to this mundane depiction of the troupe's day-to-day lives, we detect a suggestion of the venality of the actor who played *Casina*, who after the show would have been available to "marry" whoever offered money for "her" (*Cas.* 81–86; Hunter 1985, p. 31). This farcical stance of a (male?) actor as prostitute is a counterpart to the frequent staging of female prostitute characters as actors in the Plautine plays-within-the-play (see below; Duncan 2006, pp. 124–159). The lack of resources experienced by most members

of the artistic class expresses itself as the original motivation that leads someone to exercise his or her art. In addition to the poor sycophant-actor in *Trinummus*, in *Stichus* Gelasimus the hungry parasite writes and tells jokes (*logos ridiculos*, 221) in hopes of exchanging them for food (Cardoso 2006, 2018). The topic reappears *passim* in Roman comedy (e.g. in Terence's *Phorm.* 11; Beare 1964, p. 166), and, not coincidentally, in the Plautine biography recounted by Aulus Gellius.

This awareness of the low social status of performing artists was certainly one more feature overturning the social hierarchy typical of the environment of Roman festivals (Segal 1968). The portrait of a *servus callidus* emphasizes, on the one hand, the power of an actor and a playwright. But, on the other hand, while emphasizing the actors' financial, legal, and physical vulnerability, Plautus highlights another typical aspect of any performance: in his live exhibition on the stage, the actor is exposed and, consequently, dependent on the immediate approval of the audience. Such a situation demands from the performing artist a courage and resourcefulness that even those who were not fond of Plautus – like Horace – expressly acknowledged (*Ep.* 2.1.181–182, 208–213).

The Actor's Craft

The prologues of *Amphitruo* (64–67) and *Poenulus* (36–39) speak of a competition between the plays, which seemingly would also involve the recognition of the best actors (*palمام histrionibus*, *Amph.* 68; cf. *Trin.* 706–707). We find mention of penalties for paid clagues, among other strategies used by dishonest competitors seeking victory (*Amph.* 69–89). Because there is no record of official play contests at public festivals in Republican Rome, such passages seem to mimic the competitions that were central to Athenian festivals, as referred to in Aristophanes's comedy (Biles 2011). Plautus's artistic contests include elements that were typical of the Roman legal and political sphere and that contribute to a comparison of the comedy actors (such light-hearted entertainment!) with the citizens holding the most serious Roman civic offices. But the jokes do not come out of nowhere: in equating the supposed contests with elections, Plautus hyperbolically expresses the political bias behind the agonistic environment that was likely to have existed between the plays, and even among comedy and the other artistic manifestations available in Roman festivals (depicted in the prologues of Terence's *Hecyra*). One may assume, therefore, that competition was not so much for an official artistic prize as for public attention and preference. After all, the magistrates who hired the troupe and financed the *ludi scaenici* (Jory 1988; Brown 2002, p. 234) competed for honor and public attention.

This commercial setting (and the lack of any rules for official contests, as there had been in Athens) determined stage praxis. For example, it affected the number of actors in a theatrical company and, ultimately, on the stage in Roman festivals (Marshall 2006), and it explains why the “three-actor rule” that Horace would recall centuries later (*Ars* 188–192) proved incompatible with Plautine comedy. Some of the scenes require at least four speaking actors on the stage (Franko 2004). *Pseudolus* 133–169, the most populous scene of all Plautine drama, requires nine actors (including those with speaking roles and some background actors; Marshall 2006, p. 111). Nonetheless, it is estimated that

companies were relatively small, regularly including four to six main actors (Duckworth 1952, p. 76; Marshall 2006, p. 111). If so, actors would have had to undertake more than one role in each play, and additional artists would have been hired when necessary.

It is possible, then, that the ability not only to embody a character but also to play more than one role is registered in statements such as those in the prologue of *Poenulus*: “I am going, now I want to become another” (*ibo, alius nunc fieri uolo*, 126). Among the gifts of a *uorsipellis* actor, the plays within the Plautine plays usually emphasize two distinct but complementary skills. The first is memory, which allows someone to learn the roles (*partes discere*) according to a proposed script. Second is the ability to improvise in a scene through new words, whole stories, and gesticulation. But even when extremely convincing in portraying characters who are themselves creating while acting as another persona, Plautus’s work points out that such improvisation (which must have followed suitable metric patterns) is not purely spontaneous; it requires a trained actor.

The plays require also that at least some of the actors know how to recite more complex *cantica*, and sometimes to dance (*Stich.* 769–772), whatever that may mean. In addition, *fabula palliata* actors must be familiar with the costume and conventional movements of this dramatic genre. Because Plautus’s works do not provide specific stage directions, the modern reader must imagine not only the actors’ intonation (*uox*) but also their *gestus* (facial expressions, gestures, and movements on stage). Gestures are repeated in certain situations, such as holding a character in a hurry by the cloak to hinder his movement; others are understood to be typical of comedic characters, such as tossing back his own cloak in a certain way to reflect running (*Capt.* 778–779; *Epid.* 194–195) or posing as a cunning slave (*Mil.* 404).

For improvisation, some knowledge of a broader repertoire, including other theatrical genres (such as tragedy, or perhaps Atellan farce as well), would also have been useful to an extent. The staging of the actresses in *Miles Gloriosus* mentioned above alludes to Homeric epic (1017; 1048; Frangoulidis 1994, p. 81) and recalls, as the climax of improvisation, nothing less than verses from Sappho (frag. 31; *Mil.* 1270–1272). The inner audience applauds the “*retractator*” of the script (*Mil.* 1073).

The poetic license given to the actors in the plays-within-the-play leaves a message to posterity: Plautine scripts were not rigidly fixed texts for exact repetition; they were open to modifications (*retractationes*), if required by the performance. Just as today adaptations and “gags” can either make the performance successful or end in fiasco, the result of this intervention in the text depended on the talent and technique of the performing troupe, whose members and aesthetic priorities must have changed over the course of Plautus’s career.

A *Uorsipellis* Audience

Insights into Plautus’s audience will also be found within his scripts. As we have seen with the actors, however, there is limited information on which to base our conjectures regarding its composition, expectations, and behavior. Both the size (which was likely between 2000 and 3400 people; Marshall 2006) and the makeup of the audience are estimated tentatively. In Plautus, the word *spectatores* (literally “watchers”) occurs not

only in prologues or epilogues – as customary in Menander and Terence – but also elsewhere (*Amph.* 998, *Cist.* 678, *Poen.* 597, *Stich.* 673, *Truc.* 105, 482; Bain 1977). Individual names of the spectators are not mentioned at all: at most, there are references to social groups. Several of these groups, in fact, greatly resemble the repertoire of stereotypes of New Comedy, especially in the way Plautus addresses them in his plays.

It seems probable, though it is not known with certainty, that women were allowed among the spectators in the original performances of Plautus. They are mentioned in a Terentian prologue (*Hec.* 35), and in Augustan times Ovid claims that the audience of a Roman theater would have been, since Romulus's era, an opportunity for meeting attractive women (*Ars am.* 89–134). In the Plautine context, the prologue of *Poenulus* makes us imagine women in the audience (Slater 1992). It is true that those verses offer an unsympathetic view of the female spectators: the married women (*matronae*), for instance, are depicted much like the *uxores dotatae* of the comedy, talkative and tormenting their husbands even in the theater (*Poen.* 32–35). In any case, the image of the female spectators provided by the prologue is very similar to the female characters in the Plautine world (Hunter 1985; Dutsch 2008; Rocha 2015).

The *Poenulus* prologue also threatens bold slaves – those who dare to occupy seats before of free citizens could sit – with punishments similar to those imposed upon other corresponding Plautine characters (23–27; Richlin 2014), and we hear of sex workers (*scortum exoletum*, 16) who sought a more prominent place close to the stage. In addition, there are warnings for nurses holding crying babies (28–30) and for noisy lictors (18), a reference which also suggests the presence of the magistrates they worked for. References to the public as brave warriors (*Capt.* 67–68) not only reflect the themes of that play, but also remind us that the spectators lived in an atmosphere of Roman military expansion (Leigh 2004; see Chapter 20, pp. 301–303). In short, Plautine plays do more than simply list their spectators: they characterize them, and in an exaggerated way, as being of different genders, social groups, and occupations. Plautus thus gives us a picture that diverges from the idea we have of a perhaps exclusively male (and allegedly less hushed) theatrical public in ancient Athens.

It seems that Plautine plays were written for audiences in which social groups were mixed, even if they were not in a clear competition for the best seats (cf. Ter. *Hec.* 41). In any case, if front rows for senators were separated from the plebs (a practice which started in 194 BCE, according to Livy 34.54.3–8; Moore 1994; Marshall 2006, p. 77), it did not interfere with the fact that Plautus and his troupe had to work with a diverse audience, one made up of spectators whose cultural backgrounds and sensitivity to different types of humor also varied (Taladoire 1956). Based on what we know, the spectacle seemed to have been free of charge, which also allowed for diversity in an economic sense. That the cultural level was not proportional to the socio-economic level becomes clear if we remember that, at the time, teachers were mostly slaves of freedmen. For audience members of an upper social class, jokes would be made about their greed or about the taxes on their assets (Gruen 1992, pp. 202–205; Fontaine 2010, pp. 183–200). The plebs were also ridiculed, e.g. through the recurrent assumption that they, like comedic parasites, were frequently on the verge of starvation. Plautus thus offered eclectic possibilities of derision and self-mockery for every social class.

Again, some familiarity with the Plautine style would prevent the audience (and should prevent us) from taking all the jokes literally. Euclio, a stingy and paranoid old man,

insinuates that there are thieves among the audience (*Aul.* 716–720). Mercury himself, the divine prologist of *Amphitruo*, voices suspicions of dishonest spectators, just after emphatically having asked the same honorable audience to keep their honesty (15–16; 32–38; 81–85). Furthermore, some of the plays-within-the-play generate dramatic irony by depicting characters with superior knowledge as internal spectators, with which the external audience could identify. This mixture of exaltation and relegation, of fawning and embarrassment, is present to a greater or lesser extent in all Plautine comedies.

In broader terms, Plautus seems to require from his audience a *uorsipellis* attitude, which allows them to leave aside more realistic pretensions and to accept the conventions and novelties of the world built on the stage. There, the scenes representing Athens, Epidauros, or Thebes were blended with pointed references to the Roman world and may also have told the spectators about themselves and their own society. But what must this audience have known, as a background, to enjoy the spectacle?

Scholars in the past have sometimes not given enough credit to the Roman audience. A review of the prejudices against the Roman public in general, and, in particular, of the assumptions regarding the Plautine public has been instrumental in appreciating the eclectic mood and the dramaturgical quality of Plautus's work, in which slapstick comedy techniques coexist with more sophisticated resources (Taladoire 1956; Cardoso 2018). In order to have understood details of the plots and some of the jokes, as well as to have appreciated various novelties, presumably at least a part of the audience must have had a good ear for metrics and music (as Cicero, *Orator* 173, affirmed about the Roman public of his time: cf. Gentili 1979), some knowledge of the Greek language (Adams 2003), and an awareness of other types of Greek and Italic spectacles. Those abilities would have given the audience a framework for understanding the seriousness of a tragedy or the impromptu character of the *fabula Atellana* recalled in some comedic verses. As for other types of poetry – also caricatured by Plautine characters – it would have been useful if some spectators had had an idea of the heroic themes of Homeric epic (alluded to by Chrysalus in *Bacchides*), or of the sentimentalism of Greek lyric poetry (evoked by the prostitute in *Miles*), or of the emotional tone of the love elegy (mentioned in *Mercator*). But if that was not feasible, it was ultimately not a problem; the audience would soon be able to laugh at a different kind of joke presented a few verses later.

While the overexplicit repetition of certain explanations may have been useful to novice spectators, they may also have sounded mocking to anyone familiar with the author's comedy. In a dramatic genre so immersed in its own types and conventions, a significant challenge for the playwright is to obtain an effect of surprise, striving against expectations (*Bacch.* 1079; *Pseud.* 1234; *Truc.* 482). Thus, the climax lies in certain lines wherein a character abruptly addresses the spectators amid the action of the play, and, allegedly intending to avoid any astonishment from the public, says: “Don’t you be surprised, spectators, if...” (cf. *Stich.* 446, 673).

“Did you guys catch the story?” (*Capt.* 10), “Did you wrinkle your forehead?” (*Amph.* 52). Of course, the script does not allow us to hear the actual response from the Plautine audience. Nor is there any information, as occurs in some modern-day shows, to the effect that the audience actually had the opportunity to go onstage. Explicitly, we know only of some actors' expectations regarding the *uox* and *gestus* of the audience. First and foremost, the audience's job was to watch and listen attentively; secondly, spectators were expected

to sincerely applaud at the end. Although it is a somewhat tautological assumption, the 20 plays surviving today seem to signal the fact that the Plautine audience played its role very well.

FURTHER READING

Manuwald (2011) provides an updated overview of the actors and the audience in Roman comedy. For a list of names of actors who were active during the Republic, see Garton (1972). Taladoire (1951) and Panayotakis (2005) seek to explore the actors' gestures and body language in Plautine plays. On Roman actors' gestures (compared to orators' gestures), see Graf (1992), Dutsch (2002), Fantham (2002), and Cardoso (2009). Experiences in modern performances of Plautine comedy also offer insights into the pertinent topics (Beacham 1995). Csapo (2010), Csapo and Slater (1995), Easterling and Hall (2002), and Hugoniot et al. (2004) provide studies and iconography on performing artists involved in Greek and Roman theater from its origins to Late Antiquity.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Nouo Modo Nouom Aliquid Inuentum: Plautine Priorities

David Christenson

Determining Plautus's dramatic priorities is a challenge given his practice (in contrast to Terence's) of avoiding programmatic issues in prologues. We must instead glean Plautus's poetics from 20 extant scripts of irrecoverable performances, a challenge complicated by their derivation from Greek New Comedy. *Pseudolus*, as a programmatic Plautine meta-comedy, is especially instructive. In it, a clever slave is tasked with preventing the sale of his young master's *amica* (currently owned by Ballio the pimp) to a soldier. Instead of devising a simple confidence-trick to purloin the funds necessary for Calidorus to purchase Phoenicium from Ballio, Pseudolus frustrates both fellow characters and spectators in a series of blustery promises and feints, even guaranteeing his success in a wager with his older master (Simo). Pseudolus fortuitously obtains the soldier's bill of sale from the latter's slave Harpax and launches a seemingly improvised plot to abduct Phoenicium. As Pseudolus flouts expectations and metatheatrically telescopes his moves, the play becomes much more than a New Comedy about "getting the girl." I examine *Pseudolus* along three interpretative lines that suggest a coherent poetics or, more precisely, how Plautus constructs a position for his work in the comic tradition: (i) as a translation of a lost Menandrian comedy; (ii) as a comedy within a highly circumscribed genre; and (iii) as a performance in the competitive environment of early Roman theater. I conclude that Plautus's overriding priority lies in creative innovation.

From Athens to Rome

We most probably possess the opening lines of Plautus's Menandrian source for *Pseudolus*, as Wilamowitz-Möllendorff first suggested (1925, p. 107 n. 1; Fraenkel 1955; Arnott 1999, pp. 78–79). In the papyrus fragment (P. Freiburg 12 = Men. *fab.*

incert. 4 Arnott = *fr. com. adesp.* K-A 1027), a slave entreats his master to divulge the reason for his obvious gloom:

Good God, why are you chattering to yourself, gloomy and all alone? You give the appearance of someone in grief. Confide in me, take me as an advisor in your troubles. Don't look down on a slave's advice. (5) If a slave's got good character, he can prove smarter than his master. Even if his body's enslaved by chance, his character still allows him a free person's reasoning.

In the opening 19 somewhat circuitous lines of *Pseudolus* (cf. Christenson 2020, pp. 19–23 Fontaine 2014a, pp. 527–529), Pseudolus similarly exhorts the *adulescens* Calidorus to reveal the cause of his misery so that he may provide his master with good advice (19). Plautus expands on this with the prospect of more concrete aid (“with some resource or service”) associated with a *servus callidus*, who, in opposition to his Menandrian counterpart, revels in his bad character (581–582 *malitia*; for “heroic badness” in Plautus, see Anderson 1993, pp. 88–106). Discourse in the two openings points to divergent treatments of a stock situation. The Menandrian slave piques his audience's curiosity about his master's emotional state in appropriately vague language (“you *seem* to *present the appearance* of a person who's grieving,” 2), to encourage sympathy for the young man. Pseudolus by contrast tags his master as a typical Plautine comic lover (“what troubles are tormenting you so terribly?” 4), a précis of *Pseudolus*'s plot confirmed by Calidorus's first words: *misere miser sum* (“I'm so sad,” 13). Having Calidorus acknowledge his own stereotypical ethos thus immediately distances Plautus's audience from the suspense and sympathy Menander fosters. Menander's slave further reasons (5–8) that a master should consider the advice of a morally upright slave, on the supposition that the latter may only be a slave by chance, not nature. Plautus significantly omits this tidy moralizing, which in Menander provides a naturalistic rationale for why a free person might seek his slave's input. Still, the notion that one may be a slave “in body” is much developed in *Pseudolus*, where this idea receives a new twist as it relates to the eponymous clever slave. Pseudolus, as his master's emotional and intellectual superior – Calidorus immediately suggests such an inverted dynamic when he depicts himself as love's slave (*napulo*, 15) – offers Calidorus prudent assistance. But he also expatiates on his physical vulnerability in excruciating detail, a fixation that belies Pseudolus's unromantic perspective on his slavish condition and a cynicism dissonant with Menander's high-minded opposition between legal status and individual character. Another significant difference between the two comedies was immediately visible to Plautine spectators, whether or not they knew the translated Menandrian play: Calidorus clings to a writing tablet sent by his beloved, drenched in his tears (10). As the tablet appears not to figure in the Menandrian play, the exchange between Pseudolus and Calidorus centered on it that follows (20–77) constitutes a massive amplification of Plautus's source. Their banter probably reproduces only basic plot elements conveyed in Menander, such as the particular obstacles facing the young lovers. Pseudolus frames the writing tablet and its content in terms of translation when he claims Phoenicium's words require deciphering (26, *interpretari*, regularly used for the translation of official correspondence: McElduff 2013, pp. 24, 108–109, 192–193) by a kind of Sybil (25). Her scrawled letters are also characterized as her “interpreters” (42). The writing tablet thus metapoetically foregrounds translation at the play's opening. It conveys a tired New

Comedy script announcing the imminent separation of lovers, which Pseudolus must transform into a captivating performance. As a metonym for Plautus's translation project, the tablet suggests a ready medium – the wax surface of the *tabellae* is erasable – whereby a Roman playwright can reinvigorate perhaps the oldest situation of New Comedy.

Phoenicium's letter evokes vastly different responses: for Calidorus it is "written with sadness" (*misere*, 79), while Pseudolus punningly dubs it "wretchedly penned" (*miser-rume*); to him "the plot laid out for this letter is a piece of hack writing" (Slater 1985, p. 120). As the impuissant Calidorus grows increasingly despondent and sees only tragedy (85–90), Pseudolus remains calm, cynical, and pragmatic. In contrast to the Menandrian slave, who cites his good character as qualification for guiding his master, the conniving Pseudolus, far more self-controlled than his master, is the only one of the pair equipped to find a solution.

Pseudolus typically sees matters in brutally real, largely economic terms, a reflection of his commodified status as human property. He deflates any seriousness in Calidorus's pledge to commit suicide via hanging by dismissing it as an attempt to cheat him of a drachma for the rope (85–93) and dryly replies to his master's claim that he can't live without Phoenicium ("you'll live," 96; cf. his deflation of Calidorus's suicidal ideation, 348–350). Pseudolus similarly notes Calidorus's tears are of no value in the current crisis unless they are made of silver (100) and thus useful in purchasing Phoenicium. Pseudolus's unromantic attitude is encapsulated in a trademark Plautine personification: "I've got eyes of pumice – couldn't make 'em spit out so much as a single tear" (75–76). This jest is complemented by a scurrilous claim (subverting the Roman legal fiction that slaves have no parents or ancestry) that he is descended from a long line of "Dry-eye-ans" (*genus nostrum semper Siccoculum fuit*, 77); here *genus nostrum* metacomically describes the class of clever slaves who remain aloof from their foppish young masters' emotional crises in Roman comedy (Dutsch 2008, p. 101, n. 29). Pseudolus pointedly counterposes his master's emotional pain and his own corporeal torment when he mocks Calidorus's self-pitying exclamation *cheu* by sardonically noting that he, as a slave subject to his master's beatings, has an endless store (*thensaurus*, 84) of such cries.

Pseudolus welcomes the formidable challenges ahead (103–107) and boldly guarantees success to Calidorus and spectators (112–128). He emends a proverb at scene's end (he modifies "sleep on whichever *ear* you please," i.e. "don't worry," to "whichever *eye*"), purely for the sake of innovation: "my expression is less cliché" (124). This linguistic transformation bespeaks a broader capacity for not accepting things as inevitably fixed, but rather as contingent and (re)configurable. Pseudolus's next move takes spectators by surprise: in a markedly Romanizing context (125–128), the character whose name means "Liar" proclaims that no one should trust him during today's performance. While this bluster presumably charms spectators (Sharrock 1996, p. 163), the credibility of the play's hero becomes a central concern. When Pseudolus declares his intent to conduct an unspecified scheme and urges all to be on active guard against himself (128), seasoned theatergoers can expect something novel.

Pseudolus returns to the topic of chance prominently raised at the opening of Menander's play in his monologue celebrating the interception of Harpax's missive (667–693). He offers a meditation on *Fortuna*, which no doubt translates similar ideas about Τύχη, though with critical alterations emphasizing Pseudolus's peculiar agency as *servus callidus*.

Abandoning any previous plan (real or pretend) to retrieve Phoenicium from Ballio, Pseudolus, a self-styled improviser, realizes the purloined *epistula* bears the necessary ingredients for a successful Plautine deception: “Here’s the plot, here’s the treachery and trickery, / here’s the money, here’s the girlfriend for my master’s lovesick son” (672–673; cf. Sharrock 2009, pp. 1–21). In the play’s second letter, Pseudolus opportunely has found another piece of writing to co-opt for his purposes. *Fortuna*, Pseudolus continues, trumps the *consilia* of a hundred clever men like himself, though there is scope for human agency in our collaboration with the deity (678–679). The assertion that – despite fortune’s supremacy, human ignorance and suffering, and our mortality (679–686) – we can somehow control our destiny underpins the play’s themes of invention and improvisation. In the face of overwhelming limitations, resourceful individuals like Pseudolus actively contribute to the construction of their worlds (cf. McCarthy 2000, pp. 3–34). As Pseudolus demonstrates in convincing Harpax he’s Ballio’s slave Syrus, a clever actor can alter a seemingly fixed scenario; cosmic coincidence is thus married to Plautine extemporization. Pseudolus with comic irony suddenly distances himself from these heady thoughts (“that’s enough philosophizing,” 687), leaving us to contemplate their further implications. Pseudolus presents a ready example of a person of keen intelligence whose lot, for reasons we never learn, is slavery. He repeatedly shows that he alone of the play’s characters knows himself (see p. 83, below) and understands his limitations (Ballio’s pretensions stand in sharp contrast). And as Pseudolus’s willingness to imperil his body demonstrates, he is acutely aware of his mortality. Menandrian moralizing again is brilliantly appropriated by Plautus to illumine the role of creative agency and improvisation in a (Roman) world governed by *Fortuna* and the peculiar psychology of a *servus callidus*. We are not allowed to contemplate this for long, as Pseudolus then unphilosophically extols his *mendacium* (689), his successful impersonation of Syrus, and promises further deception (690–691).

The finale of *Pseudolus* (1246–1335b), “arguably the most complex musical tour de force in Roman comedy” (Moore 2012, p. 340) and mostly a Plautine addition (Lefèvre 1997, pp. 36–37, 86–89), brings into sharp focus what being “a slave in body” entails. In the first of the two closing scenes, the besotted Pseudolus’s description of the offstage *convivium* enjoyed by the play’s victors presents “a programme for Plautine comedy” (Sharrock 1996, p. 172): *itaque in loco festiuo sumus festiue accepti* (“in such a festive setting we were festively entertained,” 1254). The “divine” (1253, 1258) symposium is evocatively marked by lovers’ embraces and “bilingual kisses” (1259–1263), social harmony as master and slave celebrate side-by-side, and sloppy singing and dancing performances by a mirthful (*ludibundus*, 1275a) Pseudolus. Pseudolus’s encore performance is marred by a fall that brings an end to his *ludus* (1278a). His audience rewards him with a drink (1280a) and he soils his *pallium* (1279–1281), an ironic metonym for how the Plautine *palliata* distorts its Greek sources (Sharrock 1996, p. 173). The point becomes more salient when we consider how Plautus transmogrified the finale of his Menandrian source, most probably a wedding. Members of Plautus’s diversely stratified audience who knew Menander’s comedy fully appreciated the ironic self-deprecation here, while those who didn’t could still enjoy Pseudolus’s lively show.

In the remainder of the *canticum*, Pseudolus and Simo square their business; the status of their relationship, destabilized by Pseudolus’s mastery of language and control of the

play, comes to a head. In their earlier wager, Pseudolus's "skin in the game" was entirely literal: confinement to the mill if he fails to obtain Phoenicium and extract 20 minae from Simo (508–535) and grotesque mutilation ("inscription") of his flesh if he's shown to have colluded with Ballio (543–545). One of the most intriguing of Pseudolus's deceptions is his creation of an illusion that he is *a slave in body only*, which suggests something other than a slave in the conventional (legal) sense. Pseudolus's proposal of grim penalties is especially provocative. He first mock-legalistically submits that, if he loses the bet, Simo be allowed to drag him off into slavery (520), which indicates on some level Pseudolus does not consider himself enslaved. Similar is the confidence with which Pseudolus proposes the penalty of having Simo inscribe his body "with elm rod pens" (545); failure in this wager extends beyond the sacrifice of his body and is tantamount to ceding control of language and authorial control of the play to Simo – the writer would become written (Fitzgerald 2000, pp. 46–47).

Pseudolus gloats in his success by forestalling Simo's attempt to hand over the 20 minae owed him until Simo is ultimately forced to perform the servile task of loading the wallet onto Pseudolus's shoulder (1313–1326). Pseudolus orders his vanquished master to cease lamenting (*heu heu!* 1320) and reminds Simo how his own pain would not be merely emotional had their gamble been reversed (1320-a, 1324). When Pseudolus initially refuses to let his master off for any part of the bet, Simo promises revenge, to which Pseudolus calmly replies "Why the threat? I've got a back!" (1325). While this exchange starkly reminds us that master and slave will resume their normative relationship after the play, Pseudolus's defiance by effectively dissociating himself from his body constitutes a triumph of resolve and resistance (cf. Dutsch 2008, p. 126). The finale of *Pseudolus* foregrounds how a resourceful slave can live "free" in his own mind, regardless of whatever post-play horrors we imagine awaiting his body. Simo hands the money over (1326), and as he starts to walk away, Pseudolus cajoles Simo into (slavishly?) attending the offstage *convivium* (banquet) with the promise of the return of half the money. Plautus has metamorphized Menander's gnomic assertion about chance enslavement at his play's opening into a psychology of creative survival; *Pseudolus* celebrates imaginative possibilities within a closed system of slavery sanctioned by traditional authority. In this respect Pseudolus's innovative efforts to assert his independence mirror those of his creator, Plautus, who as a translator stakes his claim to an individual literary identity within the constraints of a stereotypic comic tradition dominated by esteemed (Greek) predecessors. Both slave and playwright labor under the overwhelming weight of authority and onerous tradition that threatens to diminish their personal agency and autonomy, yet both find innovative ways to flourish.

A New Manner of Plot(ting)

Pseudolus involves a familiar New Comedy situation: a soldier and a young man's impecuniousness stand in the way of the latter's possession of his beloved, a slave in the neighborhood brothel. In a Menandrian play, the slave might prove to be freeborn and eligible for marriage once obstacles to the couple's union are removed and the girl's true status is revealed – a small minority of Plautus's plays in fact follow this romantic pattern (see Chapter 7). Phoenicium's

catalog of the couple's carnal joys in her letter (64–68) and Ballio's characterization of her as the darling of his elite customers (225–227) indicate Calidorus's *amica* has not been shielded from prostitution, rendering a recognition scene with marriage impossible. Spectators can instead expect a typical Plautine play wherein a clever slave discovers the means to obtain the *meretrix* by tricking a pimp or soldier or *senex*, or even all three blocking characters, as Pseudolus boasts (691), though Ballio becomes the primary target in *Pseudolus*. The challenge for Plautus is to take such a stereotypical plot with its predetermined outcome and present it anew. Callipho in *Pseudolus* spotlights this problem: "What's new about a young man falling in love and freeing his girlfriend?" (434–435). This quip underscores Plautus's readiness to resort to metacomedy; *Pseudolus* upsets expectations by morphing into a playful comedy demonstrating how novelty can be achieved even within a fixed tradition.

Making the old seem new demands remarkable feats of theatrical trickery. In a virtuoso performance, Pseudolus bounds between three distinct personae – his Athenian character (Simo's slave), the self-aware Roman actor playing this role, and the spokesperson for the playwright (Wiles 1991, p. 32) – as he creates and destroys stage-illusion, controls the play's reception, and discourses on comic theater. Charinus' remark that Pseudolus is *nouos* (his primary meaning is "unknown," 700) to him captures the slave's versatility, especially as Calidorus glosses it: *nimum est mortalis graphicus*, εὐρετής *mibi est* ("oh, he's very much a picture of human perfection, he's my *inventeur*"). After Pseudolus and Calidorus fail to dissuade Ballio from his plan to sell Phoenicium, Pseudolus assures his master he'll defeat the pimp (381–384), as a *palliata* audience expects of a *servus callidus*. Pressed for details by Calidorus, Pseudolus demurs for fear of boring spectators: "plays are long enough as it is" (388). Pseudolus here toys with both Calidorus and spectators, neither of whom understands he's bluffing, in a deceptively complex way. Purportedly in the interest of narrative economy, a naturalistic feature of New Comedy (Lowe 2000, pp. 62–65), Pseudolus unrealistically breaches dramatic illusion (cf. 720–721). That Pseudolus makes such metacomical moves to cloud the transparency of an illusion he claims to support hints at a further level of artistic deception by Plautus, as is shortly made explicit by Pseudolus himself (394–414).

Any expectation that *Pseudolus* is just another clever-slave play and Pseudolus already has a trick up his sleeve to reunite the lovers is shattered when the musical accompaniment (continuous since 133) stops, and Pseudolus in the first of seven monologues confesses he lied to Calidorus (396–397). The clueless slave famously casts himself in the predicament of a poet/playwright:

But just as a poet (*poeta*), when he grasps his writing tablet,
seeks what is non-existent, but finds it
and makes fiction seem like the truth –
now I'll become a poet. Though the twenty minae
don't exist, I'll find them (*inueniam*). (401–405)

Pseudolus equates the challenge of discovering funds for Phoenicium with that of a *poeta* authoring a plausible plot/play (for the "metareflection on *poiesis*" see Barbiero Forthcoming). Dramatic success hinges on convincing spectators that falsehoods are "like the truth" (cf. Sharrock 1996, p. 154), as the playwright is charged with creating plausible

illusion onstage. In their capacity to accept convincing lies audiences willingly suspend disbelief. They collude with actors in allowing themselves to be taken in by theatrical alchemy, creation *ex nihilo* as Pseudolus describes it. Pseudolus must now manufacture a fiction that generates non-existent funds to undo Ballio's deal with the soldier. He overstates his (and the playwright's) difficulty in claiming he must forge a solution from nothing, as he has the script of his Greek source (and previous plays) at his disposal. This rhetorical exaggeration betrays a deeper deceptiveness: as becomes clearer, Pseudolus tricks us into believing he's making up things as he goes and not following a prefabricated script, in either Greek or Latin. Similarly pointed is Pseudolus's use of *inueniam* (405), which suggests literary invention (Hunter 2006, p. 82). Exactly what does it mean to be "inventive" in a formulaic genre? What are the implications of the identification of a slave-trickster with a *poeta*? How can a slave assume an authorial function and how can a playwright be in a bind like Pseudolus's? As *Pseudolus* addresses these questions, the play becomes as much about Plautine poetics as it is yet another tale of tricking a pimp and a soldier.

After giving Callipho and Simo the false impression he has a surefire plan, Pseudolus's delivers another aporetic monologue (562–573a), once again confessing his braggadocio in the preceding scene and further eroding spectators' confidence in him. Speaking as both an analyst outside the play and a character within it, Pseudolus assumes the rhetorical tack of addressing their suspicions about his credibility directly: he claims not to be merely entertaining them to distract from the fact that he lacks a strategy (564–565). But like the Platonic Socrates (*Ap.* 21d7), as Simo had recently dubbed him (465), Pseudolus is self-aware enough to know he doesn't know exactly what this strategy entails, even if he is confident of success:

Whoever comes onstage
is obligated to produce something new he's devised (*inuentum*) in a new way.
If he can't do this, he should yield the stage to someone who can. (568–570)

Pseudolus launches a new approach: even in a comedy of fixed types something new must be found (*inuentum* echoes *inueniam*, 401). Pseudolus hints at the possibility of improvisation (cf. native Italian theater) as a way out of his predicament, though he clearly works in scripted comedy. More precisely, Pseudolus suggests the creation of an illusion of improvised drama to induce spectators into his most complex confidence trick thus far (for illusory improvisation in Plautus, see Barsby 1995; Chapter 16 in this volume). Pseudolus then begs the audience's brief indulgence (571–573a) so he may further contemplate a course of action inside. Demonstrating that he now directs the play, Pseudolus instructs the *tibicen* to entertain the audience during the interlude.

Despite having intimated that success lies in improvisation, Pseudolus returns in exuberant song to execute a stunning con job (574–603b). He bombastically enacts a Plautine set piece, the triumphant monody of a *servus callidus* heralding a fail-safe plan (cf. *Bac.* 640–666, 925–977, *Pers.* 753–762). The most outrageous of the song's many confabulations is Pseudolus's claim to now have a plan (*consilium*, 575). This ballyhooed plan, whose details are not revealed and which seems not to exist, will soon be jettisoned with the new scenario (*noua res*, 601a) presented by Harpax's arrival: *nouo consilio nunc mihi*

opus est (“now I need a new plan,” 601). Pseudolus’s song of triumph is exposed as a ruse, a parody of a Plautine shtick and act of *perfidia* at the spectators’ expense (Sharrock 1996, p. 166). Since the song is superfluous in advancing the plot, its purpose lies in manipulating audience expectations. Pseudolus’s plan to (seemingly) improvise is put into practice in his encounter with Harpax, where Pseudolus’s extemporized performance as Syrus finally advances the deception plot (636–666).

The decisive deception in *Pseudolus*, as so often in Plautus, consists of a play-within-the-play. Equipped with the soldier’s letter, a costume, and five minae in cash borrowed from Calidorus’s friend Charinus, the versatile slave-actor Simia is to be cast in the role of Harpax to cheat Ballio: as Pseudolus exclaims at this prospect, *em tibi omnem fabulam!* (“there you are – that’s the entire plot/play!” 754). The ploy is conducted with metacomic awareness in *Pseudolus*, as staged improvisation moves to the forefront again. Pseudolus and Simia arrive singing a duet (905–955), one of Roman comedy’s distinctive features. Simia’s very name suggests mimesis, and his interactions with Pseudolus broach key issues of illusion (Connors 2004 locates “Monkeyman” within Roman discourse on literary and cultural appropriation). Pseudolus rejoices at having found a trickster of such bad character and so much like (*similis*) himself (907a, 938). Simia quickly shows himself to be an extemporizing actor and no slave to a script as he wanders from Pseudolus at their entrance (908–910). Despite his independence and resistance to Pseudolus’s direction (911–916, 920; Stewart 2012, p. 186), Simia demonstrates the ability to impersonate Harpax (917–918) by preening in costume (935). Simia’s confidence in his own deceptive talents matches Pseudolus’s, and he promises to play the soldier’s lackey better than Harpax himself (925-a, 929–930) by using Pseudolus’s trademark tools (“by tricks and lies,” 927). Simia highlights one of Plautine theater’s primary fascinations: identity theft, the quasi-magical, theatrical process whereby another’s appearance, words, and character are filched (cf. Petrone 1983).

In admiration of his capable understudy, Pseudolus exclaims, “Just look at this whipping statue (*uerbeream statuam*) – the pompous way he struts!” (911). This quintessentially Plautine designation of Simia as a *uerbeream statuam* highlights another congruity between the tricksters: Simia, like Pseudolus, is a slave in body only. Figuring Simia’s whip-ravaged body as a freestanding statue suggests it is a (physical) entity separate from his clever (psychological) self. Simia’s powers of deception are so formidable Pseudolus fears they pose a danger to himself (909a; cf. 1017–1027); Simia even vows to beat his *magister* at his own game (932–933). Pseudolus thus is made to realize that he is not the only master of illusion/delusion, and he too could become its victim; a clever trick implies the possibility of another, better one (cf. Christenson 2019a, pp. 139–141). Though Simia is well rehearsed (940–941), his recalcitrance creates uncertainty as to the plot’s success. For spectators, Pseudolus’s fear that his charge may wander too far “off-script” generates the tension needed for an illusion of improvisation to succeed. Simia thus embodies an adventurous, creative, and unpredictable style of comedy that clashes with the stable, naturalistic world of Menander.

The climactic scene with Ballio immediately follows (956–1116), which Pseudolus observes as a nervous eavesdropper/internal audience. The success of Simia’s performance as Harpax appropriately hinges on an extemporizing move: Simia does not know the soldier’s name that is sealed in the letter he carries. When Simia presents the letter, Ballio

asks for the name. Pseudolus panics (984–985), but Simia turns the tables on Ballio by insisting that *he* identify the letter’s seal. Ballio foolishly obliges by blurting out “*Polymachaeroplagides*,” one of a gallery of absurdly Greek soldiers’ names coined by Plautus. As they take pleasure in the pimp’s duping, spectators are treated to an exemplary piece of Plautus’s theater of deception that glimpses how such scenes could be workshopped. Simia is admitted to Ballio’s house and the rescue of Phoenicium effected, as is shortly confirmed when Simia emerges with the *meretrix* and Pseudolus escorts the pair to the *conuiuium* offstage (1051).

A Fresh Roman Concoction

The cook’s scene in *Pseudolus* (790–904) gives us the closest thing we have to an exposition of Plautine poetics as it engages in literary polemics with Plautus’s contemporaries in Roman theater, albeit elusively so in metaphor and irony, in order to establish Plautus’s position there. While critics have supposed Pseudolus and the anonymous cook were played by the same actor (Marshall 2006, pp. 102–104), a deeper connection between the two characters lies in their preoccupation with creativity and fiction. If Plautus himself played Pseudolus, as some have argued (Slater 1985, pp. 143–146), as well as the cook, these connections were palpable in performance. Gowers (1993, pp. 50–107) argues that the prolix cook, like Pseudolus, serves as a stand-in for Plautus (cf. Feeney 2010, p. 284). Examining the Greek tradition of the *mageiros* behind Plautus’s unnamed cook, Gowers (1993, p.78) establishes that:

[the comic] cook ... is a parodist. His arcane activities in the kitchen (to which he gives such spurious importance), his alteration of ingredients – by mincing, chopping, mixing, flavouring, and stuffing – mimic other forms of organization and alteration, particularly the activities of the comic author himself.

The analysis here builds on Gowers’ argument for the affinities between comedy and cooking to argue that the cook’s manifesto reveals the chief ingredients of Plautus’s comic art vis-à-vis his contemporaries’, while simultaneously evoking the Roman festival occasion of 191 BCE, a public form of the *conuiuium* described by the cook.

Ballio introduces the cook in the conventional terms of comedy (790–797): he is untrustworthy, garrulous, and boastful. Ballio’s repeated charges (791, 850, 855–865, 876, 892–895) that the cook is a thief recall issues of literary secondariness and even plagiarism (cf. Ter. *Eun.* 28, *Ad.* 13) that might be raised against any Roman playwright. Ballio’s real beef with the cook becomes apparent in their colloquy about why the cook sits apart in the forum (801) and alone is available for hire: he charges twice the standard rate (808–809). The Plautine cook then launches a lengthy polemic in defense of his preciosity, his *ingenium* (“talent,” 803), and his culinary distinctiveness (810–825).

The Plautine cook locates the central difference between his cuisine and his rivals’ in its seasonings: “I don’t season like the other cooks” (810). The rival cooks, he contends, unimaginatively dress their dishes, even heaping herbs on top of herbs as they rehash the same unremarkable ingredients. These unrefined cooks load their bland fare with excessive

quantities of strong flavorings, a combination that produces indigestion in diners. This process is imaginatively identified with an assault on diners' innards by screech owls and is said to diminish human life-expectancy (812–822). The rival cooks only transform diners into stuffed, unenergetic livestock (812, 825), not a condition a chef or a playwright wants to see in those sampling his fare. The cook's rant here takes the form of a polemic such as that of the "philologue" Ennius (*dicti studiosus*, Ann. 209 Skutsch) against his Roman poetic predecessors (*scripsere alii*, Ann. 206 Skutsch). It is unclear what exactly the cook's vague (metaphorical) criticisms are meant to suggest about his rivals, especially given our fragmentary knowledge of Plautus's contemporaries; such self-fashioning polemics primarily assert superiority over one's rivals (cf. Hinds 1998, pp. 52–74). The cook sweepingly paints a picture of comic rivals who spoil their dishes (Greek source texts?) with seasonings that are soporifically bland or dyspeptically grinding.

The cook's further statement of his culinary program (828–888) is prompted by Ballio's query about its life-extending capability (826–828). To explain how his spices can prolong human life by 200 years (829), the cook performs a rich demonstration of his skills blended with a demand for suspension of disbelief. First, he names his special seasonings: these prove to be nonce formations, ad hoc inventions that highlight the cook's bountiful creativity in mixing up Greek and Latin elements into fresh, new combinations (Christenson 2020, pp. 275–277). To leave little doubt that a poetic program lies behind the neologisms, Plautus includes his own signature spice: *maccidem* (832), whose base recalls the playwright's *nomen* Maccius. Absent a cooking flame, the cook's seasonings miraculously bring their pans to a boil (833), transporting diners to a magical "Golden Age" of cuisine. Whereas his rivals' seasonings reduce diners to livestock (822–825), the addition of the cook's spices paratragically transforms seafood into "Neptune's herds" (834), and instead of becoming *boues* themselves (812), diners feast on the cook's fantastically spiced dishes of beef and lamb, designated "herds of the earth" (835). The cook thus proves to be Pseudolus's equal as a paratragedian (cf. the latter's memorable outburst, 702–705a); early Roman comedians competed not only with each other but also with writers of tragedy, and Plautus's frequent paratragedy vouches for his genre's supremacy.

The cook also foregrounds some of the distinctive features of Plautus's comic art: vivifying, creative verbal play, parody of linguistic registers, and self-reflexive irony. He outrageously combines ingredients as he strains everyday credulity to create novel cuisine. Ballio, forever the agelast in *Pseudolus*, remains unimpressed and curses the cook and his fictions (838). Undaunted by Ballio's disbelief, the cook amps up his hyperbole: the divine scents of his concoctions assume the form of an Olympic sprinter and epically reach the heavens (841)! He claims to be Jupiter's exclusive chef, so much so that on the cook's day off, Jupiter goes to bed without dinner (842–846).

More bickering about the cook's fee ensues and Ballio unimaginatively commands his slave to mimic the furtive cook's every move in his house (855–865). The unfazed cook counters with a typical device of Plautine comedy: a mythical comparison with culinary features. The *leno*, despite his anxious suspicions, should take heart (866), because the cook will do for the *senex* what Medea did for the decrepit Pelias. This can hardly be a mythical mistake as some have supposed (pace Fraenkel 2007, pp. 60–61), but is a calculated misappropriation of a well-known Greek culinary myth. Ballio overlooks the cook's linguistic sleight of hand in employing *concoxit* ("cook up," 869) instead of the vox propria *recoxit*

(“reconstitute”) in his mythic analogy. Though the pimp fears the cook may be a “sorcerer” (872), the *leno* misses his substitution of Pelias for Aeson in the myth, as well as the most implausible claim (871) that he, a *senex* and the main comic target of *Pseudolus*, could be transformed into an *adulescens*, the beneficiary of the ruse afoot. The cook signals Ballio’s inevitable defeat at the hands of the *Pseudolus*, to be characterized by Ballio himself as his own death (1220–1237). The *leno*, the crafty cook’s unreceptive audience throughout the scene, to his own peril remains un-captivated by the cook’s culinary magic.

The cook begins to wrap up his rant by agreeing to teach Ballio how to prevent his own thievery for a didrachma fee (the cook’s original charge for his services), on the condition the *leno* “believe him” (877). Before Ballio can digest this surprising stipulation, the cook presents him with a characteristically Plautine conundrum: is Ballio planning to feast his friends or enemies today? To Ballio’s terse reply (“my friends, of course,” 879) the cook, with delicious alliteration and assonance, urges that he instead invite his enemies:

*nam ego ita conuiuiis cenam conditam dabo
hodie atque ita suavi suauitate condiam:
ut quisque quicque conditum gustauerit,
ipsus sibi faciam ut digitos praerodat suos.*

I’ll spice the spicy spread I’ll serve your guests
with such sweetness
I’ll make whoever tastes a tad of my seasonings
gnaw off the ends of his own fingers. (881–884)

In this odd paradox (“feed your enemies, not your friends”), the cook dishes up a cornucopia of typically Plautine effects: the triple polyptoton *conditam ... condiam ... conditum* to highlight the theme of spice; the figura etymologica *suavi suauitate*; and the grotesque capping image of the insatiable diner devouring his fingers. Focus here shifts back to diners (*conuiuiis*; cf. 812, 821) and their satisfaction at this *cena*, after they had all but disappeared from the cook’s fantastical conceit (828–873). Ballio is unimpressed and lamely retorts by reiterating his charge that the cook is a thief (885–887). The cook then speaks his final line in the play: “perhaps you don’t believe my words” (888). Delivery in performance would highlight the cook’s attitude (melancholic, exasperated, threatening?), but irrespective of tone, the cook again raises the matter of his artistic credibility. In what sense should we trust the cook or believe the outlandish things he has just said? In theatrical terms, what is the nature of an audience’s belief in comic fiction? The cook is pulling Ballio’s leg about his guests’ self-cannibalization as he serves up a final hyperbole in support of his preciousness: he in fact aims to deliver a feast from which guests depart intact, satisfied, and delighted, their lives perhaps transformed. The vicious Ballio, who merits no place at such a *conuiuium* resists the cook’s charms to the end of the scene (889–891). Still, the culinary excursus has an unsettling effect on Ballio, and the pimp’s thoughts turn to the cook’s double, *Pseudolus* (895–904).

The beguiling cook leaves spectators with a vision of a *conuiuium* that glimpses the festival performance. At Plautus’s bountiful comic feasts, such as *Pseudolus*, guests are treated to unstinting medleys of Greek and Latin ingredients, sometimes dissonant and dismembered, but blended into fresh comic fare crafted to elicit aesthetic pleasure. As the

cook transforms old staples through the addition of his unique spices, so Plautus adapts New Comedy and its prescribed menu by sprinkling it with his own hybridized stratum of neologisms, mythic and hyperbolic comparisons, verbal play, and innovative turns on old jokes, along with creative flights of fantasy that invite spectators to take a fresh look at things. The Plautine poet-cook is a hero of transformations who magically converts the most familiar elements into something delightfully new, if often also estranging. The cook's scene provides a model for Plautus's adaptation and translation project (cf. Feeney 2016, p. 56).

Finally, in the cook's bold claim that he merits double pay lies a clever nod to preparations for the performance of *Pseudolus* in 191 BCE. Responsibility for the festival associated with the dedication of the Magna Mater's temple rested with the praetor, Marcus Junius Brutus, rather than a lower-ranking aedile usually tasked with the *ludi*. With his status very publicly riding on this special event, Brutus sought out Rome's most popular entertainers. Although we know little of the negotiations for plays, we reasonably may assume a renowned figure such as Plautus approaching the end of his distinguished career might exert some leverage on this occasion. In this light, Ballio's and the cook's wrangling about fees may playfully recall negotiations between Plautus and his troupe's *actor* with the praetor before the *ludi* (these probably were private, as the humor here). We recall from his grand entrance that Ballio is anxiously and ambitiously preparing to celebrate the (to him) special occasion of his birthday (133–264). The *leno* also makes an unmistakable callout to Brutus (probably seated prominently in the audience) when, faced with multiple debts and debtors, Ballio depicts himself as a *praetor urbanus et inter peregrinos* (Christenson 2020, p. 331), the office held by Brutus in 191 BCE. We need not construe this as a satirical assault on Brutus, who might have enjoyed an amicable relationship with the celebrity playwright, so that these references were taken lightly in the spirit of festivity. While Ballio never relinquishes his claim that the cook is a thief, the cook maintains that he deserves a higher fee than his peers because he delivers a better product: “I see that wherever I go for hire, my services are delivered according to their cost” (849–850). Those fans of Plautus who grasped the tenor of the cook's conceit might wholeheartedly agree.

Conclusion

Pseudolus thus takes extraordinary measures to make the case for its, and its author's, novel position within New Comedy, both at Athens and Rome. Behind Plautine comedy's exuberant rhetoric and language lies an impulse to see and make the world anew. Fraenkel (2007) identified two Plautine mannerisms – “transformation and identification motifs” (e.g. Charinus' designation of Simia as an eel, 747) and “animating the inanimate” (e.g. the aroma of the cook's food racing to Jupiter) – that betray, more broadly, a comic sensibility reluctant to accept conventionality and that instead approach experience, down to the finest details, as malleable (for Plautus's role in the Roman translation project, see Feeney 2016). Whether this re-creative impulse ever extended to Rome's rigid social hierarchy (itself largely an ideological construct of authoritative language) remains a matter of dispute in Plautine criticism. Regardless, an interrogative, transformative perspective that

constantly seeks to “defamiliarize” objects and “recover the sensation of life” (Shklovsky 1965, p.12) undeniably permeates the Plautine corpus.

While no other Plautine play presents a (meta)comic program with the same intensity and focus as *Pseudolus*, its concerns permeate the entire corpus. Plautus’s priorities as a translator are best illustrated by comparison of *Bacchides* 494–562 and the 113 parallel lines of Menander’s *Double Deceiver* preserved on papyrus (Handley 1997). Comparative analysis shows that Plautus recasts his Menandrian source text to support not only the dramatic priorities of *Bacchides*, but also his overall aesthetic, musical, and linguistic preferences (Anderson 1993, pp. 3–29; Fontaine 2014a, pp. 519–526), and suggests we should approach Plautus in terms of intertextuality as well as translation and adaptation. Other clever slaves in Plautus distance themselves from their servile bodies and so their legal status à la *Pseudolus*: *Bacchides* 365 (Chrysalus), *Captivi* 650 (Tyndarus), *Mostellaria* 991–992 (Phaniscus), and *Poenulus* 138–139 and 398 (Milphio).

Both Plautine prologists (e.g. *Amph.* 116–119, *Capt.* 53–8, *Men.* 7–10) and characters (e.g. *Amph.* 986–987, *Asin.* 256, *Cas.* 860–861, *Merc.* 3) metacomically vouch for their plays’ freshness. *Casina*, like *Pseudolus* a late play, similarly focuses on novelty, both in its manipulation of comic motifs and in terms of Plautus’s translation project (Christenson 2019b, pp. 36–40, Barbiero Forthcoming). Although no other hired cook (cf. *Aul.* 280–349, *Cas.* 720–748, *Merc.* 741–782) has such an expansive role as the cook of *Pseudolus* or matches his grandiloquence and imagination, cooks and cuisine are abundantly associated with comedy in Plautus (Gowers 1993, pp. 87–93). A clever slave articulates his machinations in culinary terms at *Persa* 52, “I’ll concoct (*excozero*) something nasty for the pimp.” Observing the cogitations of the *servus callidus* Palaestrio, Periplectomenus comments, “Whatever it is (he’s discovered), he won’t serve it uncooked, but well-done.” (*Mil.* 208). Chalinus pledges to mix up another cook’s dishes and seasonings in creating fresh trouble for his enemies (*Cas.* 511–514). Given his intimate connection with plotting and playwrights, the Plautine cook, whose repertoire includes violent cleaving, creative infusion and blending, straining credulity, and serving up transformative fare, makes a compelling spokesperson for Plautine comedy and the pleasing *convivium* it offers audiences.

FURTHER READING

Gratwick (1982) provides a useful introduction to Plautine comedy and its dramaturgy within the broader context of early Roman drama. For overviews of Plautus’s adaptation of Greek comedy see Fontaine (2014b) and Telò (2019). Bain (1979) and Handley (2001) are among the many insightful studies of Plautus’s translation practices (with specific reference to *Bacchides* and Menander’s *Dis Exapaton*). For an excellent introduction to the institution of Roman slavery, critical to any assessment of Plautine poetics, see Joshel (2010); for slavery’s representation in *Pseudolus*, see Stewart (2008). Slater (1993) and Bungard (2014) examine Plautine comedy’s complex, contested, and programmatic use of improvisation. Wright (1975) and Stehle (1984) were among the earliest critics to recognize *Pseudolus*’s function as a stand-in for Plautus and so his importance as a metapoetic figure.

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CHAPTER SIX

Plays of Mistaken Identity

Costas Panayotakis

Antiphilus of Syracuse:

He, that commends me to mine own content,
Commends me to the thing I cannot get.
I to the world am like a drop of water
That in the ocean seeks another drop,
Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself.
So I, to find a mother and a brother,
†In quest of them, unhappier, lose myself.
Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors* 1.2.33–40

Plautus and the Tradition of Mistaken-Identity Plays

The device of mistaken identity is at the core of the plot of all drama that challenges notions and preconceptions about self-fashioning. This device takes different forms, may be seen in many variations, and cuts across different genres: Sophocles's *Oedipus* and his introspective journey toward the discovery of his identity is perhaps the most celebrated case-study of this theme in tragedy. But wrong judgements, misconceptions, and mistaken identities also occur in comedy, especially in the plays of the post-classical period, which belong to the so-called Middle and New Comedy, as well as in the Latin adaptations of these Greek plays – exceedingly popular during the early and mid-Republican periods – which are conventionally known as “comedies in Greek dress” (*fabulae palliatae*). For example, the protagonist in Menander's *Epitrepontes* (*The Arbitration*) is a young man who, through his wrong assessment of his wife's character and behavior, embarks on a

journey of discovering not only the identity of the woman he had violated in the past but also some unpleasant aspects of his own identity. Equally revealing in terms of selfhood and social prejudices is the dense network of misconceptions Terence sets up in his sophisticated play *Hecyra* (*The Mother-in-Law*), in which all three of the male principal characters (the old man, the young man, and the male slave) misinterpret the behavior of the three principal female characters (the mother-in-law, the young wife, and the female prostitute). The message conveyed by such plots seems to be that people jump to conclusions much too quickly and are too eager to condemn others. This lesson applies in particular to the cases of mistaken identity of low-class, marginalized women, whose social identity and juridical status have been mistaken by the other characters in the play until the denouement. At that point, the women in question will turn out to be freeborn maidens of citizen status and the moral and social order of the play's fictional world will be restored. Women in this category offer the dramatist an especially rich vehicle for exploring the theme of identity. Plautus often employed such stereotypical conventions in his scripts, and frequently did so by developing on stage all the serious implications that such a precarious social situation might generate: for example, *Rudens* (*The Rope*), one of the playwright's somber comedies, presents the tragic story of the abducted "prostitute" Palaestra.

However, perhaps the most well-known type of mistaken identity in drama, which even today guarantees high levels of audience entertainment with its multiple scenes of confusion, identity crisis, and misunderstandings, is a farce involving a set of doubles and generous amounts of dramatic irony. This irony is tragic in its origins but is played comically, and in front of a complicit audience that possesses superior knowledge and enjoys watching the discomfort of the characters who cannot tell one twin from the other, or are not even aware of the existence of the set of twins in the play. Needless to say, this is hardly an original theatrical scenario, and the numerous titles of comedies in Greco-Roman antiquity indicating twin brothers or sisters suggest that the "twin" theme was much in demand. Plays entitled Δίδυμοι ("Twin Brothers") are attributed to the Middle and New Comedy Greek playwrights Antiphanes the Younger, Anaxandrides, Xenarchus, and Euphron, while Aristophan, Alexis, Antiphanes the Elder, and Menander appear to have composed plays that may have involved twin sisters. The same popularity is indicated by similar titles in Roman theatrical culture: one of the titles the lexicographer Festus attributed to Plautus was *Gemini Lenones* ("Twin Pimps"), a play from which only one line survives. Among the fragments of the so-called *fabula togata* ("comedy in Roman dress") there is a play attributed to Titinius entitled *Gemina* ("Female Twin"); the fragments of the native-Italian Atellane comedy (see Chapter 1, pp. 21–23) include plays entitled *Gemini* ("Twin Brothers," Novius), *Macci Gemini* ("The Twin Brothers Maccus," Pomponius), and *Duo Dossenni* ("The Two Dossennuses," Novius), and in Cicero's time the mime-writer Laberius composed the (now fragmentary) play *Gemelli* ("Little Twins"). Multiple sets of twins, as suggested in the titles *Trigemini* ("Triplets") and *Quadrigemini* ("Quadruplets") – attributed to Plautus and Naevius, respectively – will have increased the opportunities for comic confusion. More importantly for our discussion, though, it would have been interesting to know what themes (other than visual farce) were explored in these plays of confusion and mistaken identity – especially with regard to creating, sustaining, losing, and regaining an identity at private and public levels – but the extant fragments do not allow such speculation.

Doubling, mirroring, and playing with permutations of sets of two plot-components can assume many forms in comic drama: two siblings with the same name; a set of real twins; a set of imaginary twins; two unrelated people bound with strong feelings for each other; two distinct characters with one impersonating the other under suspicious circumstances; two contrasting stage-locations; two complex human relationships; or even two lexical units with similar acoustic effect (that is, paronomasia: puns and rhymes; on this topic Fontaine 2010 is essential reading). Such duplications form integral parts of the humor in many of Plautus's complete plays: *Miles Gloriosus*, which features an imaginary twin sister as part of a trick and was first performed around 206 BCE; *Menaechmi*, which, on metrical and historical grounds, falls probably in the middle period of Plautus's career (de Melo 2011b, pp. 418–419); *Captivi*, which stars a devoted slave–master pair and was first performed probably in 189 BCE; *Bacchides*, which was first performed probably just after 189 BCE and featured a cast that included a set of identically named sisters; and *Amphitruo*, a work which, like *Bacchides*, belongs to the final period of Plautus's career (de Melo 2011a, pp. 7–8). There have been detailed scholarly discussions concerning the symmetry in the structure of these scripts, which enhances the impression of the “doubling” theme in them (for example Callahan 1964; Clark 1976; Kella 2011). My focus in the current chapter, though, will be on *Menaechmi* and *Amphitruo*, not only because they were Shakespeare's primary sources of inspiration for his *Comedy of Errors*, but also because Plautus, I would argue, exploits the “twin” theme for different reasons in each play, and this makes them worth comparing and contrasting as a pair. My thesis is that in *Menaechmi* mistaken identity is primarily used to generate audience entertainment and fast-paced humor, to promote the notions of harmless escapism and social exemplarity, and to tackle, perhaps at a superficial level, the profound questions of “what makes up an identity” and “what happens to people when this sense of identity is lost or challenged” (see, for example, Menaechmus's soliloquy at 957–962, mentioned again at the end of this chapter) – a topic the playwright had already started exploring in *Miles Gloriosus* (see p. 104, below). In *Amphitruo*, on the other hand, I will argue that Plautus casts the mistaken-identity net much more widely, deeply, darkly, and ambitiously, and the result is not easy or clear to interpret. Although the same pattern of mistaken identity operates in both *Menaechmi* and *Amphitruo* with almost calculated precision and with plenty of memorable farcical scenes and recurring motifs such as madness and inebriation, the dissimilarities in Plautus's treatment of the topic are illuminating for the near-tragic sense of loss experienced by the characters in *Amphitruo*, whose honesty is doubted and whose social and moral integrity are challenged.

The mathematical equation that I see operating in *Menaechmi* and *Amphitruo* with regard to the plot device of mistaken identity is as follows: “character A is accidentally and innocently thought to be character B because of reason xyz.” In *Menaechmi* “reason xyz” is that “character A” (Sosicles) and “character B” (Menaechmus) are identical twins, whereas in *Amphitruo* “character A” (represented by Jupiter and his mouthpiece Mercury) *deliberately* impersonates “character B” (represented by Amphitryon and his appendage Sosia) and, by means of divine powers, is assuming character B's appearance. Character B – in a weaker and inferior position in relation to character A – gets into physical trouble and/or suffers emotional trauma because of the confusion with character A, while character A benefits from the confusion. Members of the audience might expect him to get his

comeuppance at the end of the play, when the truth is revealed and the misunderstandings are resolved. Wrongs, however, are not redressed in either of the plays under discussion, and it is interesting to consider why this is so (especially with relation to *Menaechmi*, where the “culprit” is a human, Sosicles, who can be punished, whereas in *Amphitruo* the “impostors” are divine figures, who are exempt from punishment and retribution).

The motifs of drunkenness, insanity, irrationality, fickle vision, and unwisely accepting things at face value – motifs recurring in the comic sufferings caused by the mistaken identity of the principal characters Menaechmus, Sosia, and Amphitryon in these symmetrically composed scripts – create a disquieting atmosphere of carefully plotted errors, numerous misconceptions, and twice the amount of fun for the Roman audience – a farcically enhanced version of the Greek intertexts. This destabilization of the world in which the fictional characters lead their lives, and which they and those around them (often painfully) realize is untrustworthy, becomes an emblem for Plautine drama itself, which we are invited to view as complex and illusory, presenting us with a distorted mirror image of “Roman” life.

Structuring a Series of Misconceptions in *Menaechmi* and *Amphitruo*

Menaechmi is the story of Sicilian twin brothers, born in Syracuse. One of them is significantly called Menaechmus, “Steadyshaft,” a military name ironically echoing the unheroic identity and actions of the character as henpecked husband, while also alluding to the fourth-century Syracusan mathematician Menaechmus, whose name was associated with the duplication of the cube, a theme crucial to the play’s understanding and enjoyment (Gratwick 1993, p. 138; Papaioannou 2012). The second twin is called Sosicles, “Glory Savior,” another “epic” name sarcastically alluding to the undistinguished personality of its bearer. The twins are separated in early adolescence and, through a series of mishaps, one of them (Menaechmus) is taken to faraway Epidamnus (a town in modern Albania, the name of which may be humorously rendered as “Bankruptcyland”). There he grows up, settles down, and establishes his own identity: even though he finds the duties of patronage and tradition in general wearisome (571–601), he is important enough in society to have people depending on his support (including a double-crossing hanger-on named Peniculus, “Wee Willy”), and marries (unhappily) a wealthy, nagging wife, from whom he steals precious items to give to his mistress, a prostitute called Erotium (“Lovely”). This is the type of behavior that a traditional Roman would absolutely condemn openly (but perhaps be envious of silently). Meanwhile, the second twin (Sosicles, whom his grandfather, in memory of the allegedly dead twin, renamed Menaechmus) piously travels the world with the help of his trustworthy slave Messenio in search of his lost twin. When he first appears onstage, he gives the favorable impression of a cautious, focused, and determined family man on a mission (242–246). Though identical as twins, Menaechmus and Sosicles do not seem to have the same personality. But once people start mistaking one twin for the other, comedy takes over, psychological plausibility is set aside, and Sosicles’s personality becomes equally as shameless as (or even more shameless than) the personality of Menaechmus. This is the main outline of the play, which Plautus based on a Greek original, the title and author of which are entirely unknown.

The Roman audience is aware of the existence of the twins from the outset, because the prologue-speaker has told them as much (68–71), and is now left to watch the farcical events of the confusion as they unfold onstage. Scholars have suggested various means through which, they argue, Plautus helps the audience of these mistaken-identity scenes (that is, not the characters on stage, but the people watching the play) to distinguish the twins from each other: through props (such as the dress which Menaechmus has stolen from his wife to give to his mistress), through stage entrances (different wing entrances and exits for Sosicles and for Menaechmus), or even through music (played only when Menaechmus comes on stage; Marshall 2006, p. 105). Possibly, the audience is invited to forget which twin is which because the laughter derives from the simple fact that in every scene someone is out of place or mistaken.¹ This view, also supported by the strong possibility that, until the scene of the reunion of the brothers, the same actor performed the roles of both Menaechmus and Sosicles (Marshall 2006, pp. 105–107), maximizes the farcical effect of the play by giving the protagonist’s role neither to Menaechmus from Epidamnus nor to Sosicles from Syracuse but to the *Menaechmi* brothers, who are protagonists as a twin pair, not as individuals, and whose shared name forms the title of the play. Visually, too, it is possible to see how this interpretation is sustainable and meaningful. After four “errors” have taken place (see Table 6.1 below), the two brothers become one: at the crucial point when Sosicles realizes that people have been mistaking him for someone else, and that he can benefit from this confusion, he lets go of the incriminating garland which ties him to Erotium and could betray his movements (555). He thus becomes (once again and deliberately this time) identical to the doppelgänger whom he has not yet met.

The stage represents a street outside the houses of Menaechmus and Erotium – a polarized arrangement of space, symbolizing (according to Segal 1969) the contrast between, on the one hand, the suffocating *industria* (“hard-working diligence”) that characterizes Menaechmus’s boring everyday life and unhappy marriage and, on the other, the illicit

Table 6.1 The structure of mistaken identities in *Menaechmi*.

—	<i>Prologue (1–76)</i>
—	Peniculus meets Menaechmus. They meet Erotium. She talks to Cylindrus (77–225)
—	Sosicles and Messenio arrive (226–272)
I	Cylindrus mistakes Sosicles for Menaechmus (273–350)
II	Erotium mistakes Sosicles for Menaechmus (351–445)
III	Peniculus mistakes Sosicles for Menaechmus (446–523)
IV	<i>Erotium’s maid mistakes Sosicles for Menaechmus (524–558)</i>
V	Peniculus and Menaechmus’s wife mistake Menaechmus for Sosicles (559–674)
VI	Erotium mistakes Menaechmus for Sosicles (675–700)
VII	Menaechmus’s wife mistakes Sosicles for Menaechmus (701–752)
VIII	Menaechmus’s wife and her old father mistake Sosicles for Menaechmus (753–881)
IX	<i>Old father and doctor mistake Menaechmus for Sosicles (882–965)</i>
X	Messenio mistakes Menaechmus for Sosicles (966–1049)
XI	Messenio mistakes Sosicles for Menaechmus (1050–1059)
—	Recognition scene between Menaechmus and Sosicles and <i>end of play</i> (1060–1162)

uoluptas (“pleasure”) that Menaechmus has been enjoying at his wife’s expense. Having introduced to the audience his first main character and three people who relate to him (namely his hanger-on, his mistress, and her cook, who cooks for him), Plautus arranges the mistaken-identity scenes of the story in a fast-paced manner. The sequence of events gives the impression of haphazardness, though in reality the “errors” (as Gratwick 1993, pp. 16–30 has compellingly demonstrated) have been arranged in groups of three. The first group focusses on the theme of the lunch that Erotium and her cook are to prepare for Menaechmus and Peniculus; the second on the theme of the precious garment that Menaechmus has stolen from his wife to give to his mistress (and in this respect Plautus himself has in all likelihood added to the Greek original the short scene in which Erotium’s maid mistakes Sosicles for Meanechmus); and the third on the theme of insanity, with which both twins pretend to be temporarily afflicted, and which has inspired Plautus to add probably an entire scene, namely Menaechmus’s feigned madness and the visit of the doctor whose task it is to examine and cure the “mad” Menaechmus (Fantham 2007; Lowe 2019). Taking into consideration the observations of Gratwick (1993) and Lowe (2019) regarding the structure of the play and its relationship with the (now lost) Greek intertext, I would present the development of the story as follows in Table 6.1, from the point of view of the different characters’ misconceptions and wrong inferences, which I number from I to XI (italics denote substantial scenes that Plautus himself is likely to have added to the Greek original; the additions are not exhaustive or detailed. I am not singling out, for example, the polymetric songs, which Plautus added to the Greek original).

It is clear from the schematic arrangement of the events in the Table that the first three misconceptions relate to the same twin (Sosicles) and feature (in reverse order of original stage-appearance and as a mirroring effect) the characters who met the other twin (Menaechmus) when he first came out of his house (Peniculus→Erotium→Cylindrus | Cylindrus→Erotium→Peniculus). Misconception IV (probably Plautus’s addition) is, interestingly, the only scene in which a character (the shrewd maid of the prostitute) comes close to guessing correctly the identity of the wrong twin. The remaining episodes probably should best be understood as pairs of misconceptions. Mistaken-identity scenes V and VI relate to the same twin (not Sosicles now but Menaechmus) and show how the two women in Menaechmus’s life (his unnamed wife and his mistress) react to what they believe to be Menaechmus’s bizarre behavior. The interest of these scenes lies in the unwillingness of the wife and of Erotium to accept the first twin’s protestations, which were, are, and will continue to be dismissed as silly jokes (317–318, 378–381, 396, 405, 782–783, 824–825), leaving Menaechmus *exclusissimus* (“totally excluded” 698), a comically formed superlative that may well apply not only to Menaechmus’s literal exclusion from the houses he frequented but also to the character’s metaphorical exclusion and loss of identity as husband and lover. “Errors” VII and VIII bring together for the first time the second twin with the first twin’s wife and her unnamed father, and a pattern now seems to be formed in which a victim of the misconception misleads yet another character in a contagious manner: for example, Peniculus had misled the wife, now the wife is misleading her father, and in the next scene – mistaken-identity scene IX, almost certainly Plautus’s own invention, and the highlight of the play in terms of superb para-tragic

farce – the father misleads the incompetent doctor who tries in vain to cure Menaechmus, who has misled both of them by pretending to be insane.

It is appropriate for the climax of this comedy of errors to reserve the last two misconceptions (X and XI) for the character who should really have known the identity and personality of his master best, namely Messenio. Even he, however, fails to distinguish the twins when he sees only one of them at a time, and when he has both of them in front of him he expresses amazement at their similarity: “that man is either a swindler (*sycophanta*) or your twin brother. | For I have never seen a man more alike to another man. | Believe me, neither water is anywhere more similar to water nor milk to milk (*neque aqua aquae nec lacte est lactis, crede mi, usquam similis*) | than this man is to you and furthermore you to him” (1087–1090). The choice of theme (likeness and identity) and imagery (drops of water or milk) is important not only because Shakespeare borrows it (*Comedy of Errors* 1.2.35–36, Quiller-Couch and Wilson 1962, cited above; cf. also the same combination of theme and imagery in Adriana’s speech in *Comedy of Errors* 2.2.122–132), but also because it takes us back to the scene of the arrival of Sosicles at Epidamnus and to Messenio’s warnings about the city’s inhabitants: “among the inhabitants of Epidamnus there are the greatest pleasure-lovers and boozers; | moreover, very many swindlers (*sycophantae*) and flatterers (*palpatores*) | dwell in this city” (258–261). It is as if the story has come full-circle, and the end sees not Menaechmus’s reconciliation with his nameless wife, who will be put to auction by Sosicles’s trusted slave (1157–1162), but his happy reunion with his original family (his twin brother) and the restoration of his Sicilian identity.

Importantly, both the designation *sycophanta* in the same unfavorable sense of the term and the imagery of two indistinguishable drops of milk also occur in similar contexts, and in the mouths of slave or false-slave characters (Sosia/Mercury), in *Amphitruo*, in which Plautus again deals with doubles. In that play the amazed slave Sosia says of the god Mercury, who is impersonating Sosia himself, “nor is milk more similar to milk (*nec lact’ lactis magis est simile*) than that me is more similar to this me” (601); and the disguised Mercury calls his father Jupiter, who (as part of a trick) impersonates Amphitryon, “a fully expert swindler” (*nimis hic scitust sycophanta*, 506). There is, then, a strong intertextual relationship between the two scripts, and part of the reason why Plautus wants his audience to make the connection, I believe, is to signal to them that, in the later play, he exploits mistaken identity for a different purpose.

Amphitruo is our only extant mythological farce (starring both gods and humans) from Roman drama and the only extant work from Latin literature in which comedy is closely intertwined with tragedy. This applies to the (so far unidentified) model which Plautus adapted to compose his play (Lefèvre 1998; Christenson 2000, pp. 45–55), to the audience’s awareness of the generic hybridity of the events they are invited by the prologue-speaker to witness on stage, and to the metatheatrical criteria according to which a play is to be viewed as tragedy or as comedy: Mercury in lines 51–63 of his prologue speech emphasizes that the play in question is a *tragico[co]moedia* (see Chapter 14). The plot of *Amphitruo* focuses on the circumstances surrounding the birth of Hercules and the cunning scheme that Jupiter, Hercules’s father, devises in order to beget his son with Alcmena, the virtuous wife of Amphitryon, who is about to

return home from war: the adulterer god assumes the exact likeness (*imago* is the significant Latin word used at 121–122 to denote this likeness) of the mortal husband, while Jupiter’s son, Mercury, in order to aid his father’s lust, disguises himself as Amphitryon’s slave, Sosia (once again, Mercury at 265 uses the noun *imago* to refer to the identical appearance he has assumed so as to bamboozle Sosia). *Imago* is a semantically elusive term and the Latin equivalent of the Greek noun εἶδωλον (see Liddell–Scott–Jones s.v.), and could have several meanings, all of which indicate a visual as well as audible representation of a person or thing (*OLD* s.v. 1–13). In Plautine comedy *imago* frequently denotes the image of character A, which character B has assumed in order to deceive character C, and sometimes also character A (*OLD* s.v. 9). In this sense, *imago* occurs as a kind of technical term in prologues or in scenes that function as prologues, and it always refers to trickery and deception. In addition to the passages of *Amphitruo* mentioned above, *imago* is employed in the episode when the slave Tyndarus and the master Philocrates pretend to be master and slave, respectively (*Capt.* 39), or when the courtesan Philocomasium pretends to be her imaginary twin sister in order to fool her custodian (*Mil.* 151). But *imago*, like the Greek εἶδωλον, could also refer to an apparition or ghost (*OLD* s.v. 5), and this squares with the supernatural nature of the disguised Jupiter and Mercury as they appear to human eyes. Sosia, Amphitryon, and Alcmena are all baffled by their encounters with the divine “false” characters, and various allegations, both light and serious, are leveled against the humans because of these encounters.

Although this story is obviously not a case of biological doubles, the “twin” plot device is pronounced visually (through the identical costumes and masks worn by the actors: see Marshall 2006, pp. 127, 149, and *Am.* 142–143 for the crucial distinguishing feature in the costumes of Mercury and Sosia, a visual sign that facilitates dramatic irony and makes the audience complicit in the scheme against Amphitryon’s household), thematically (Dupont 1976; Christenson 2000, pp. 13–18), and lexically. When, for example, Sosia mentions to Amphitryon the incredible likeness he himself has witnessed of his own image and the appearance of another man who claims to be Sosia, he sums up the situation with the words “to cut a long story short, this man has become a twin Sosia at your service” (*geminus Sosia hic factus tibi*, 615). And when Amphitryon wants the sealed chest to be opened so as to reveal the golden bowl he was intending to give as a gift to his wife Alcmena, Sosia drily remarks: “you have given birth to [a second] Amphitryon, I have given birth to a second Sosia; now if the bowl has given birth to a bowl, all of us have doubled” (*tu peperisti Amphitruonem <alium>, ego alium peperisti Sosiam; | nunc si patera pateram peperit, omnes congeminauimus*, 785–786) – a line of masterful tripling in vocabulary, syntax, and numbers of syllables, which reaches its climax with the compound verb *congeminare*, “to double,” first attested here. Furthermore, the phraseology of misconceived judgment found in *Menaechmi* occurs also in *Amphitruo*, signaling that this play too is to be viewed – at least initially – as a “(tragi)comedy of errors.” The verb *errare*, “to think in error,” “to be mistaken or deluded,” which in *Menaechmi* Sosicles uses to refer to Erotium’s wrong inference (481–482), and which Menaechmus employs to advise Messenio that he (Messenio) has mistaken him (Menaechmus) for someone else (1025), is also used by both of the impostors in *Amphitruo*: Mercury boasts that “I will fill up both of those men and the whole of Amphitryon’s household with misconception

(*erroris*) and insanity (*dementiae*)” (470–471), while Jupiter is pleased with himself on account of the fact that “already both of them, the slave and his mistress, have been fooled (*frustra sunt*) thinking that I am Amphitryon: they are utterly wrong (*errant probe*)” (974–975).

However, the mistaken-identity scenes in *Amphitruo* are darker, more sinister, and somewhat crueler than the corresponding scenes in *Menaechmi*, given the vocabulary of deception and intrigue that accompanies Jupiter’s and Mercury’s bragging statements. The misapprehensions in *Amphitruo* form part of a carefully engineered trick that is sustained by the person who is being mistaken for someone else. Unlike the errors in *Menaechmi*, these are not “innocent” mistakes, but divine acts of deliberate impersonation aimed at destabilizing the human characters’ mental balance (see 470–471, cited above) in front of an audience that has always been in the know. The gods invite/compel the complicity of the spectators in the ludic activity/performance. Mercury declares: “now my father wants that Amphitryon be ridiculed [*deludi*]: I will ensure that he will be utterly ridiculed [*deludetur*] immediately, spectators, while you are watching” (997–998; cf. 1005); Jupiter declares “and I will throw their household today in complete and utter confusion [*frustrationem*]” (874–875; cf. 980; and Argumentum I.5, I.7, and II.5). In fact, Plautus in *Amphitruo* is not interested in resolving the misunderstandings by bringing the doubles face-to-face on stage at the end of the play, as he had done with the twin brothers Menaechmus. For such a meeting happens already in lines 153–462 of *Amphitruo*, when Sosia meets his doppelganger Mercury. In the following Table 6.2, I have outlined who meets whom onstage in *Amphitruo*, and I have singled out with an asterisk (*) the confusions generated by Jupiter and Mercury’s cunning plan. On the basis of the Table it becomes clear that the lengthy confrontation between Sosia and Mercury (as disguised Sosia) at the start of the story is symmetrically meant to pave the way for the explanatory meeting between Jupiter and Amphitryon at the play’s end (printed in bold type). These episodes are important because they frame a series of binary mistaken-identity encounters that form the heart of the play: namely, Alcmena’s meetings with her false husband and with her real husband (printed in italics).

Unlike in *Menaechmi*, where the victims of the misconception were mostly the twin brothers (especially Menaechmus), in *Amphitruo*, in addition to Amphitryon and his slave Sosia there is also Alcmena, Amphitryon’s wife, who, though innocent and virtuous, is most seriously affected emotionally, morally, and socially by the intentional impersonation of the gods. Alcmena is the unjust recipient of many charges by both her (real) husband and his slave: Amphitryon accuses her of madness (696, 727, 729), dreaming while awake (697), *stultitia* (“foolishness” 709), *superbia* (“pride” 709), being possessed by evil spirits that need to be exorcized (775–777), and the worst accusation an honest woman could have faced, adultery (809–820). Likewise, Sosia accuses her of madness (703–704 using Bacchic imagery; 718–719 “being pregnant with madness”; 727–728; 753), having imagined in her dreams the night with the false Amphitryon (738–740), and being capable of playing the greatest tricks to deceive her husband (782). Herein lies, I would argue, the crucial difference between the two plays of mistaken identity, and it is within Alcmena’s tragic character-portrayal as the blameless prey of Jupiter’s lust that we should look for the serious message of *Amphitruo*.

Table 6.2 The structure of mistaken identities in *Amphitruo*.

0	<i>Mercury appears dressed as Sosia (1–152)</i>
1*	The real Sosia and the false Sosia meet (153–462)
2	Mercury dressed as Sosia (463–498)
3*	<i>Alcmena with Jupiter, whom she mistakes for Amphitruo, and with Mercury, whom she mistakes for Sosia (499–550)</i>
4	The real Amphitryon and the real Sosia on stage (551–632)
5*	<i>Alcmena with the real Amphitryon, whom she mistakes for the false Amphitryon, and with the real Sosia, whom she mistakes for the false Sosia (633–860)</i>
6	Jupiter as himself (861–881)
7*	<i>Alcmena with Jupiter, whom she mistakes for Amphitryon (882–955)</i>
8*	Jupiter with Alcmena and Sosia, both of whom mistake Jupiter for Amphitryon (956–983)
9	Mercury dressed as Sosia (984–1008)
10	Amphitryon (1009–1020)
11*	Amphitryon and Mercury, whom Amphitruo mistakes for Sosia (1021–1034 and fr. i–vi)
12*	<i>Alcmena and the real Amphitryon, whom Alcmena mistakes for the false Amphitryon (fr. vii–x)</i>
13	Amphitryon, Blepharo, Sosia (fr. 11–14)
14	Blepharo, Jupiter as false Amphitryon and the real Amphitryon (fr. xv–xix and 1035–1039a)
15	Amphitryon (1039b–1052)
16	Bromia (1053–1075)
17	Bromia and Amphitryon (1076–1130)
18	Jupiter as himself and Amphitryon (1131–1143)
19	Amphitryon (1144–1146)

* Confusions generated by Jupiter and Mercury’s cunning plan.

Misjudging Alcmena

In his excellent commentary on *Amphitruo*, Christenson (2000, p. 45) sees the play as primarily a sex-farce and relates the interpretation of the adultery theme to the stage presentation of Amphitryon’s wife. He reminds the readers how impeded our view of Alcmena’s unhappy stage-musings is by the fact that we do not actually see the grotesquely padded male Roman actor performing the role of the heavily pregnant (and lustful) matron, who would make the audience roar with laughter by rubbing her protruding belly, while simultaneously flirting unashamedly with her “false” husband: “In short, it is difficult to see how Plautus’s Alcmena is meant to be portrayed as a heroine of tragic proportions who straightforwardly embodies the highest ideals of female *pictas*” (2000, pp. 37–43, quotation from 43). I do not understand why the Roman audience would have found the sight of a male actor playing Alcmena funny, since they would have been used to seeing men playing female roles in tragedy. I also doubt that the heavily pregnant Alcmena should necessarily appear as grotesquely padded, because I think that heavily

pregnant women on stage need not have been a grotesque spectacle: if a male actor was playing the role of the pregnant Alcmena in the lost tragedy of Euripides *Alkmene*, presumably the audience would not have found this a risible spectacle. The Duchess of Malfi appears heavily pregnant in Act II, Scene I of Webster's play of the same name; the boy-actor who would have played the role of the Duchess would not (I suppose) have been a comic sight, when he rushed out of the stage at the end of the scene to give birth. Why should Plautus's Alcmena *have to be* grotesque? Furthermore, since we know so little about music in Plautine drama, why should we assume that its function in the scene of Alcmena's song (633–654) was to undermine, as Christenson (2000, p. 41) suggests, rather than enhance (as I would argue), the seriousness of Alcmena's feelings? I will resist the temptation of arguing that Alcmena is a Roman ancestor of Desdemona (although the similarities between *Amphitruo* and *Othello* are striking and deeply rooted), but I would certainly see her as a vulnerable and fragile person, who is sexually exploited by the king of the gods and soon to be unjustly accused of adultery as a result of intentionally created false identities (for a nuanced account of her complex character, see also Dutsch 2008, pp. 153–156).

Amphitruo, like Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, features not one but two sets of doubles, thus multiplying confusions, destabilizing personal identities and, importantly, distorting other people's views of those identities. On the basis of the plays under discussion and the protestations of Menaechmus and Alcmena, it seems that identity has little or nothing to do with self-fashioning or with what one's name is; identity is a role that is created and defined by how identity is performed in private and public spaces and by how other people perceive this performance. The gods Jupiter and Mercury appropriated the human identities of Amphitryon and Sosia easily; before the end of the play they abandoned these identities equally easily. In the same way, it seems to have been easy for the human characters to have had their identities distorted, challenged, and lost: over a short period of time Menaechmus was thought to be insane, his wife lost her marital status, Sosia felt diffident about his own existence, Alcmena lost her credibility as virtuous wife, and Amphitryon confessed that he no longer recognized himself. The message of *Amphitruo* and (to a lesser extent) of *Menaechmi* seems to be, then, that it is very easy for the multiple audiences of the plays (I mean both the characters onstage who, as internal audience of a play-within-a-play scene, are watching and are misled by a mistaken-identity episode, and the external audience watching the play) to misinterpret and misunderstand a person's identity. Identities are not fixed concepts; rather, they are flexible and frequently shifting entities (Sosia uses the verb *immutare*, "to change," at *Amph.* 456 and 846 to refer to the perceived transformation of his own identity and of the identity of others around him), and that is part of the fun. But there is more to it than farce. The lesson impressed on the audience is that it is often unwise to trust even your own eyes (let alone other people's words) and to claim that you know for certain what you claim you know.

Vision, Knowledge, Insanity, and Identity Crisis

Unreliability of vision and instability of knowledge are traditional themes in mistaken-identity literature (again the example of Oedipus is instructive in this respect), and signify how precarious, inferior, and fallible human condition is. Plautus's sustained and sophisticated

toying with the concept of vision occurs throughout his repertory (see the insightful analysis of Sharrock 2009, pp. 100–115). In *Menaechmi* and *Amphitruo* in particular Plautus seems to be fond of signaling to his audience that, when a character announces (by means of a formula such as *sed eccum uideo X*, “but here is X arriving,” or *quid ego uideo?*, “what’s this I see?”) that he or she is witnessing with their own eyes the entrance of another person onstage whose name they identify, the audience should understand that there is something comically wrong about to happen. This is, for example, how misconceptions and misunderstandings were originally announced verbally and formed mentally by the cook Cylindrus (275), the prostitute Erotium (357), the parasite Peniculus (463, 567), the unnamed wife of Menaechmus (705), and the father-in-law of Menaechmus (898). Vision, therefore, does not guarantee accuracy, veracity, or the truth, but misleads, can be manipulated, and can lead to loss of identity.

A particularly apt example of this ambiguity is associated with the power that male characters attribute to female trickery. In *Miles Gloriosus*, the woman Philocomasium is so cunning with her words that she is deemed capable of making others believe that they have not seen what they have actually seen (186–195); by pretending to be her (imaginary) twin sister who claims not to recognize the slave Sceledrus, Philocomasium is driving him to despair and forcing him to doubt his own identity. Sceledrus feels the need to ask the slave Palaestrio to confirm if he (Sceledrus) is himself or someone else: “for (I fear) that [we] have lost ourselves (<nos> *nosmet perdiderimus*) somewhere; she says that she knows (*nouisse*) neither you nor me” (*Mil.* 429–430). What’s interesting in Sceledrus’s phraseology regarding his loss of identity is the connection he makes between the stability of his own identity and *someone else’s* assertive knowledge, or firm denial of knowledge, about it. Philocomasium firmly denies that she knows Sceledrus, and she is so convincing in her lie that Sceledrus has serious doubts about his selfhood. The stability of a character’s identity, therefore, seems to depend not on who the character himself or herself says he or she is but on who the character appears to be *in other people’s eyes*. Plautus understood this tension and pointed it out through Sosia’s celebrated lines (*my emphasis*) *sed quom cogito, equidem certo idem sum qui semper fui. | noui erum, noui aedis nostras; sane sapio et sentio* (“but when I think about this, I am certainly and beyond any doubt the same I have always been. | I know the master, I know our house; my brain and my senses are in the right place,” 447–448). At this point the actor playing Sosia, in a moment of Plautine metatheatrical genius, steps outside of the mask and jokingly validates the identity of Sosia, the character he is bringing to life with his acting (Dutsch 2015, pp. 18–19).

Visual recognition of someone’s identity is a sign of sanity for all parties involved in the process. On the other hand, doubting or mistaking one’s identity by, for example, innocently confusing two people is viewed as a symptom of insanity, which affects all the characters involved in the confusion. Consider, for example, the frequent connection between verbal forms of “knowing” (*nosco, notus, ignotus, scio*) and vocabulary indicating sanity or insanity (*sanus, insanus, insanio*) in the mistaken-identity conversations between the cook Cylindrus and the twin Sosicles (293–296; 298–299), Sosicles and his slave Messenio (373–374, introducing also the theme of drunkenness), Cylindrus and Messenio (324–325), the parasite Peniculus and Sosicles (504–506), and Peniculus and his master Menaechmus (632–636). Insanity as a recurring theme was introduced casually near the start of *Menaechmi* (197–198) in the form of a joke between Menaechmus and Peniculus, but it quickly spread as a

humorous accusation that affected almost all the characters in the comedy and paved the way to the play's most farcical scene, the para-tragic feigned-madness scene of Menaechmus (828–875). Sosicles calls Cylindrus crazy (282–283, 288–292); Cylindrus thinks that Sosicles is mad (309, 312); Sosicles casts doubt on the sanity of Erotium (390, 394–395, using animal imagery); Peniculus asks Sosicles if he is in his right mind (510); Sosicles addresses Peniculus with the comic superlative-degree vocative *insanissime* “utterly crazy” (517), the same adjectival form that the old father-in-law employs against Sosicles (818–819); Sosicles questions Menaechmus's wife's sanity (738); even Menaechmus himself, in his brief but important soliloquy, after his father-in-law and the doctor have left him onstage, doubts his own sanity (957–962). However, this is neither a profound psychological moment nor a fully developed exploration of identity loss, and Menaechmus's introspection ends on a positive note.

In *Amphitruo*, Amphitryon accuses the real Sosia of drunkenness (574), the plague (581), madness (604, 798), being affected by black magic (605), and neglecting his duties because of sleep (620–621). Mercury accuses Amphitryon of being possessed (fr. vi [vii]), while Alcmena accuses Amphitryon of being afflicted by evil spirits (fr. viii [xii]). Sosia himself, who at the start of the play appeared confident and smug, becomes genuinely anxious about his identity (in addition to 447–448, cited above, see 455–458). Likewise, Amphitryon on at least two occasions asks *socially inferior* characters, his slave Sosia and the slave-girl Bromia, who works for Amphitryon and Alcmena, to identify him by declaring that they recognize him; in that way they would restore his identity, sanity, and actual existence in the world of the living, about all of which he has serious doubts (781, 822, 844–846, 1039–1052, 1076, 1082–1083, with imagery of resuscitation from death and with frequent exclamations of *perii*). Amphitryon's nervous breakdown and identity crisis could have been played comically or seriously, but perhaps in harmony with the overall tragicomic mode of the play it would be best to understand it neither as fully comic nor as entirely tragic, but as an identity-crisis scene of a Harold Pinter play, rich in its ambiguity and open with regard to its interpretation. We are not quite sure how to react to it.

Conclusion

The self-conscious generic ambiguity of *Amphitruo*, which combines tragedy with comedy, the impersonation of divine characters who without qualms assume the identity of human characters in order to sexually exploit an innocent woman for the sake of giving life to Hercules, and the atmosphere of menacingly comic confusion between doubles, which brings amusement to the mischievous divine characters and to the complicit audience but frustration and distress to the mortal characters, suggest that slapstick humor was not the only reason why Plautus wrote this play. With the “double” theme of *Amphitruo*, Plautus may be commenting both on the illusory nature of drama as mimetic action and on the illusory nature of life viewed as a play at which people enact roles rather than their true selves² (an early precursor of the notion that Petronius in his *Satyricon* and Shakespeare in *As You Like It* would make more famous with the imagery of the world as a stage and of people on it as members of a theatrical troupe). This view is corroborated by the verbal reactions of Menaechmus, Amphitryon and Bromia, who, in key scenes of *Menaechmi* and *Amphitruo*, use the word *mira* (*Men.* 1104 and *Amph.* 772, 1080), almost a term of

dramaturgical literary criticism, to refer to the “strange,” “astonishing,” and “amazing” events they have been hearing and seeing as the story and their involvement in it has unfolded. But Plautus, I would add, is also making a serious statement about the artificiality of human identity, which can be constructed and deconstructed at will, the inability of the human condition to grasp truth, and the tension that exists between reality and the experience of reality, between belief and fact, and between vision and certainty. Episodes of mistaken identity are not only farce but may also have a dark side, and can easily lead to wrong assumptions, unjustified suspicions, and unfair accusations, which in turn may undeservedly destroy blameless victims. *Menaechmi* sketches comically and not profoundly the risky effects of mistaking an identity. *Amphitruo* explores in a not-altogether-comic fashion the potentially disastrous implications of assuming someone else’s self and of losing one’s own.

NOTES

- 1 This is the suggestion of the editors of the volume, to whom I am grateful for their useful feedback.
- 2 Another suggestion of the editors of the volume, which I gratefully acknowledge.

FURTHER READING

The issues of identity, constructing and misunderstanding the self, and performing the self in Greek and Roman drama have been discussed in passing by Slater (1985), Duncan (2006), Traill (2008), and Sharrock (2009). Mistaken identity seen in all its complexity in Roman drama deserves a full-length study, which does not exist yet. Burrow (2013) offers the most stimulating analysis of Shakespeare’s use of Plautine and Terentian drama.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Plautus and the Marriage Plot

Sharon L. James

When he took up the Greek *palliata* in Rome, Plautus inherited a marriage-minded genre. The standard plot of New Comedy is almost universally described as “boy loves girl; boy can’t get girl; with help, boy gets girl.” To “get” girl, in extant Greek New Comedy, seems to have meant marrying her. That pattern holds in Terence’s six plays, as well, though with pervasive irony and undercutting. But Plautus’s theater differs starkly from this sentimental, bourgeois plot structure: within his plays, the intention of marriage is formally announced or accepted by a father or brother only six times (*Aulularia*, *Curculio*, *Poenulus*, *Rudens*, *Trinummus*, and *Truculentus*), and not always in celebratory fashion (see *Truculentus*). In his other 14 plays, a marriage might be rescued (*Stichus*) or even anticipated (the elder pair in *Epidicus*) within the action of the play, but more often marriage is neither a possibility nor a consideration: the girl that the boy “gets” is often a *meretrix* (a courtesan or brothel slave), ineligible for wedlock. I review below the ways in which Plautus avoids or downplays the generic requirement for marriage that characterizes New Comedy.

Menander, the Father of New Comedy

The Athenian Menander is credited with having created New Comedy, whose roots are evident in the fragmentary genre Middle Comedy. There were other Greek New Comic poets, of whom the best attested are Diphilos, Philemon, and Apollodorus, but even less of their work survives than of Menander’s corpus. Menander’s comedies appear to have ended, overwhelmingly, in either a wedding or the reunion of a separated couple, as in *The Arbitrants* (Brown 1990 reviews plot patterns for Menander with a focus on love, marriage, and prostitution). So pro-wedding was Menander that he sometimes arranged

multiple weddings: *Dyskolos* (*The Grumpy Old Man*) arranges two marriages, *Aspis* (*The Shield*) appears to have ended in a double wedding, and *Hiereia* (*The Priestess*) probably ended in a triple wedding, including an older-generation marriage. No doubt there were more such multiple ceremonies in his corpus of 100-some plays.

These unions offer happy endings, causes for communal celebrations. They reunite fragmented families, create new families, and resolve differences between neighbors and friends. They rescue citizen girls who have been lost to their families or suffered pregnancy by rape (a pattern disturbing to modern readers and mystifying to scholars, but common in Menander's corpus; see James 2014). They resolve disputes between husbands and wives. Most importantly, they mark the maturing of the all-important young citizen male; his readiness to become head of his own family and an active participant in his city (Sommerstein 1998). The young man is typically in love with a girl, and the obstacles separating them vary on a standard scale: mistaken identity, hidden pregnancy caused by rape, temporarily lost citizenship of a dispossessed child, and sundry other misunderstandings. When the confusion is cleared up, a wedding can be arranged that unites two young people (close in age, in contrast to historical Athenian practice) who are already in love and that brings together a larger community, often by equalizing social and financial asymmetry via the marriage of a wealthy young man to a girl whose family is of lower status and fewer resources (Lape 2004).

In Menander's theater, the establishment of a happy, new, young family supports the continued strength and stability of the polis, as Lape (2004) demonstrates. Whatever one's view of Menander's politics (Lape 2004 argues that he is a democrat hoping to see Athens independent of Macedonian rule; Major 1997 and Owens 2011 that he is closely affiliated with the Macedonian ruler in charge of Athens), one would agree that, as a member of the Athenian elite, Menander was deeply embedded in the social, cultural, and political life of his city. Whether he wanted Athens to regain self-rule or was comfortable being an elite supporter of Macedonian rule, Menander was fully invested in the citizen life and citizen structures of Athens.

Plautus, the Outsider Behind the Roman Stage

Plautus, by contrast, was not a member of Roman citizen society. In fact, he may not have been Roman at all. He lived and worked in Rome but is said to have come from the town of Sarsina, about 180 miles north, a biographical detail that lacks confirmation (Festus *Gloss. Lat.* 274 L; Jerome *Chron.* Olymp. 145.1). If Plautus did come from Sarsina, or any significant distance from Rome, Latin was not his first language; so when he composed his free adaptations of Greek plays, he was working in not one foreign language but two. Virtually all other details we have for his life are utterly improbable – that he was forced to work in a mill, for instance – but he seems to have spent much of his life living and working in Rome, without ever actually *being* Roman. He produced extremely popular plays for Roman religious festivals, plays with Greek settings and names. These plays retain numerous references to Roman institutions, practices, and even laws, and were received by their audiences as representing Roman social realities, as many scholars have argued.

No Plautine play shows Menandrian investment in citizen society. Indeed, Plautus's drama is far more interested in mocking citizen society than in celebrating or solidifying it. Further, as every reader or viewer knows, his true interest is the *servus callidus* (clever slave) rather than the young lover or the father-son relationship so crucial to the theaters of Menander and Terence. Indeed, the Plautine *adulescens* (young man) typically hopes to see his father dead or defrauded so that he can get the money he needs to gain access to his girlfriend (Segal 1968, pp. 15–20, 27–29). The brilliant deceptive slave is the true hero of Plautus's stage, and when that trickster does help a boy get a girl, she is usually a *meretrix* and cannot be his forever: the genre makes clear that young men's fancies eventually move on, and that at some point they will have to grow up and settle down as husbands. Even when a *meretrix* is freed by her lover, she will not make an acceptable wife in the bourgeois settings of New Comedy: if she has had extramarital sex with other men, she lacks the *pudicitia* (chastity) that the genre requires for its middle-class and upper-class families.

Plautus has, in fact, little interest in romantic or sentimental love among the young, or in establishing new citizen families. Even in the few plays that bother to marry off two young people already in love (*Cistellaria*, *Curculio*, *Poenulus*, *Rudens*), the lovebirds do not dominate the stage action. As W.S. Anderson (1993) demonstrates, in Plautus's plots the heroic clever slave often upstages the lover. In other plays, marriages may be forced upon a father by rape (*Truculentus*, *Aulularia*) or pushed for by a comic conspiracy to see a citizen girl decently wed rather than given without a dowry (*Trinummus*). In *Casina*, the wedding announcement comes as an afterthought given in the epilogue. In these plays, it is never clear that the bride wants to marry her bridegroom – indeed, in some cases she might not. Plays with *meretrix* girlfriends cannot end in marriage: in *Asinaria*, *Bacchides*, *Mercator*, *Miles Gloriosus*, *Mostellaria*, and *Pseudolus*, the *adulescens* “gets” the girl but does not marry her. Sometimes, as I argue below, Plautus deliberately removes either the possibility or the announcement of a wedding.

In what follows, I briefly review Plautus's plays and argue that his lack of interest in stable citizen marriages and families is everywhere evident, perhaps in the first place with his apparent tendency to prefer to adapt plays authored not by Menander but by one of the other Greek New Comic poets. I start with the plays that eliminate the possibility of creating a new citizen family through marriage, beginning with the proviso that it is unnecessary to discuss *Captivi*, as it has neither female characters nor a love plot.

Wedding-Impossible Plays

Asinaria has an enamored *adulescens* in the person of Argyrippus – in fact, it has two, as he has a rival for the young *meretrix* Philaenium. As a practicing *meretrix*, she is not marriage material for the likes of Argyrippus, whose father is said to be a senator (871). In this play, the boy does get the girl with help from both clever slaves and his perverse, lecherous father Demaenetus, but he will not be able to keep her. His mother discovers the whole plot, in which her husband has maneuvered to rob her of her own income in order to purchase Philaenium's exclusive services for a year; and while she is angrier at Demaenetus for both corrupting his son and competing with him for Philaenium, she is little pleased

with Argyrippus and seems unlikely to continue financing the affair. The play ends in explosive comic punishment for the reprobate father, and no doubt some on-stage cuddling of the young lovers, but it does not, and cannot, lead to marriage. Although Argyrippus and Philaenium have an unusual amount of stage time, they are less interesting than the clever slaves Leonida and Libanus. The prologue attributes the Greek original, under the title *Onagros*, not to Menander but to an otherwise unattested Demophilus. With Henderson (2006, p. 151), I am inclined to be suspicious of this name (in part because of the punning name Philodamus at line 444) and to think it possible that Plautus is putting forth a play of his own. At the very least, he teases his viewers, who would have expected an adaptation of a comedy by a Greek playwright whose name they had heard before.

Bacchides, too, cannot produce a marriage: it has not one but two boys in love and has *meretrices* sisters inconveniently bearing the same name, Bacchis (a name that always indicates permanent *meretrix* status in Roman Comedy). The improbable, but dramatically necessary, doubled name engenders much of the plot of this funny play through the misunderstanding of Mnesilochus, who believes that his friend Pistoclerus has betrayed him by taking up with his beloved Bacchis. Once he learns that she has a sister named Bacchis, more hijinks and deceptions ensue, in which his family's clever slave Chrysalus rooks his father Nicobulus out of fantastic sums to buy the sister's contract away from an unpleasant soldier. The brilliant slave Chrysalus is the true star of this play, which has one of Plautus's most shocking endings: having realized that he was tricked out of his money, Nicobulus takes Philoxenus, father of Pistoclerus, to the sisters' house, where their sons are having a lavish party (purchased with Nicobulus's money) with their beloveds. The old men bang on the door and try to threaten the girls, but yield almost instantly to their charms, then go inside to join their sons in unspecified debauchery.

Bacchides is based on Menander's *Dis Exapaton* (*Double-Deceiver*), a reference to the doubled trickery of Chrysalus, who pulls off not one con job on his master, but two. The explosive ending, in which fathers and sons join in off-stage revelry and at least canoodling with *meretrices*, appears utterly impossible for Menander's theater, which as far as can be told does not include a single *senex amator* inappropriately lusting after a young woman. I suspect that in Menander the sisters would turn out to be the long-lost daughters of another neighbor, so the play could end in a double wedding. If so, they would be just about to start their professions, as with the lost daughters in *Poenulus*: they could not have had sex with anyone else. The point is worth mentioning not in any hope of reconstructing Menander's Greek original, but because it indicates the massive, anti-romantic changes Plautus made in not merely refusing to arrange a wedding, but in ensuring that a wedding was impossible. As Anderson (1993) demonstrates, comparison of the opening of *Dis Exapaton* with the opening of *Bacchides* makes clear that Plautus made enormous alterations. I suggest that he did so in the conclusion as well, substituting his comic but sordid final scene, which features a fourth speaker (cf. Franko 2004), for a more sentimental Menandrian ending. As we will see with *Casina* and *Mercator*, Plautus makes this sort of change more than once.

The raucous *Casina*, based on Diphilos's *Kleroumenoi* (*Lot Drawers*), makes almost constant hay about a wedding – for two slaves, not citizens. The marriage is a ruse to give one of two citizen men sexual access to the eponymous Casina, an exposed slave girl,

raised by Cleostrata (the mother of the household) as nearly a daughter. The father, usually called Lysidamus, and his unseen son Euthynicus are both enamored of her and seek access to her by marrying her to one of their slaves. The *senex* plans to give her to his farm-manager Olympio, while the son – through his mother’s agency – seeks her for his military service slave Chalinus. Formally, such a relationship would be *contubernium* (the legal term for the unions of slaves, who could not have *iustum coniugium*, legitimate marriage), but the play uses only the terms for citizen marriages. The two slaves compete bitterly, even knowing that they would have to share Casina with their owner. The prologue-speaker acknowledges the scandalous situation when he states emphatically that she will be discovered as a free citizen, and that nothing untoward will happen to her. I list the play under “wedding-impossible” because during its action Casina is enslaved, so she cannot engage in *iustum coniugium*. That is, everybody is talking about “marriage” for a person who cannot have legal marriage. Cleostrata contrives, with assistance from her neighbor Myrrina, wife of Lysidamus’s reluctant co-conspirator Alcesimus, and her own brilliant slave Pardalisca, to disguise Chalinus as Casina for a wedding to Olympio. Thus, when they attempt to have sex with “Casina,” both Olympio and Lysidamus find themselves serially confused and then assaulted (almost certainly sexually; the text is fragmentary at the crucial moment, 904–990) by Chalinus. Humiliated, they surrender to Cleostrata, who accepts her husband’s promise to behave properly in the future, and the play ends. The epilogue announces the wedding, after the drama has ended: “Audience, we’ll tell you what will happen indoors. Casina will turn out to be/the daughter of the neighbor Alcesimus, and she’ll marry our young master, Euthynicus” (1012–1013). This denouement accords with the prologue’s guarantee that Casina is a citizen and will suffer no sexual harm.

Strikingly, the *anagnorisis* (recognition scene) of Casina is removed from the action: its assertion in the prologue frees Plautus to substitute his shocking final scene. As Arnott (2003) argues, Plautus eliminates the natural and obvious scene in which Myrrina would recognize on Casina a token of some kind, probably a piece of jewelry. In helping to disguise Chalinus as Casina, Myrrina would have identified Casina as the daughter she had given up for exposure some 16 years earlier. If this necessarily indoors scene could not be plausibly staged, a lively and comic messenger scene, performed probably by Pardalisca, would have presented the news to both the disappointed Lysidamus and the audience (as indeed happens in *Epidicus*, discussed below). Thus again, as with *Bacchides* (as I propose), Plautus removes a sentimental scene that reunites a fragmented family and creates a new family, replacing it with a riotous ensemble scene of triumphant women and a sexually humiliated *senex*. Casina is so unconcerned with the citizen wedding as to eliminate it from the drama, mock it during the pseudo-wedding scene (especially at 814–820, where Pardalisca tells the disguised Chalinus to trick and control “her” new husband), and assert that slave-weddings are observed with greater ceremony in Italy than citizen weddings (73–74).

Epidicus implicitly promises throughout to marry off the *adulescens* Stratippocles and the prisoner of war Telestis, whom he bought while on campaign. She is identified immediately as a lost citizen girl: she is of “charming and noble beauty” (*forma lepida et liberali*, 43). The adjective *liberalis*, a code word (also *perliberalis*; cf. *Pers.* 130, 521, 526; *Ter. An.* 123; *Phor.* 164, 168 and 814–815), marks a woman as being of citizen birth and assures

the viewers that she will be reunited with her family. (Indeed, she is, and she will be, but not as the viewers expect.) Shortly after, she is identified as “born of a good family” (*genere prognatam bono*, 107), something she has presumably told Stratippocles. He evidently believed her: in perhaps the play’s most implausible feature, he has stayed hands-off: “I’ve done nothing, by force or fault, to her decency” (110), he tells his friend Chaeribulus. The word *pudicitia*, decency, puts the final stamp on Telestis’s citizenship, as it is the primary term for the proper sexual morality of citizen women. Stratippocles orders his father’s slave Epidicus to find the money he needs to repay the moneylender for Telestis. The viewers can relax and expect her to be identified as a citizen, perhaps Chaeribulus’s sister.

Shortly after, the precise subject of marrying a woman of a decent family – even a poor one – explicitly arises, with a twist. After the convenient (and lucrative) death of his wife in Athens, Stratippocles’s father Periphanes decides to find Philippa, the woman he had raped and abandoned 16 years earlier in Epidaurus. She bore a daughter, whom he believes he now has at his home. (As he will discover, that young woman is the prior beloved of his wayward son Stratippocles, who lost interest in her upon seeing Telestis.) Periphanes plans to marry Philippa and unify their family, thus providing Telestis with legitimacy. He is a bit nervous, but his neighbor Apocides, father of Chaeribulus, exclaims that there is no shame in “bringing home a poor wife, born of a good family” (169–170a). The phrase *genere natam bono* (170) echoes the earlier description of Telestis. Father and son appear to plan the same action, namely to marry a citizen woman of no means. The elderly rapists in Plautus’s *Cistellaria* and Terence’s *Phormio* (as well as Menander’s *Hiereia*, and perhaps other plays) also reveal a guilty conscience about their past crimes, so Periphanes’s plan would not come as an enormous surprise to viewers. If they believe that he is correct about the girl in the house, they may look forward to some comic moments in which father and son discover each other’s secret females, followed by a double wedding.

But Plautus has more surprises up his sleeve than his audience could have expected: Telestis turns out to be the daughter of Periphanes and Philippa, a fact guaranteed not by Periphanes, who cannot recognize his own daughter, but by Epidicus, who knows her on sight. In this play, the clever slave actually takes the girl away from the boy! (On the specter of half-sibling marriage in this play, see Dziatzko 1900; Keyes 1940; Goldberg 1978; Slater 2001). One might then expect her to be given to Chaeribulus in marriage, while a different bride is found for Stratippocles. But in yet another twist, Plautus withholds a wedding altogether from Telestis and sets up instead a marriage of her parents, as Periphanes says to Philippa “give me your hand” (559), a formal part of the Roman wedding ceremony. In contrast to normal practice for recuperated daughters (e.g. *Rudens*), when Telestis is taken into her new home, not a word of marriage for her is heard. None of the young people in *Epidicus* gets married. The men next door, Apocides and Chaeribulus, disappear rather than become joined by marriage to Periphanes’s house. Goldberg (1978) argued that *Epidicus* has no Greek original, and I am inclined to agree (contra, Lowe 2001). In this play, Plautus shows no regard for young marriage and anticipation of citizen fertility. If Telestis’s parents appear to be heading for a belated shotgun wedding, theirs is hardly a union of young love and it does not promise more children. Once again, Plautus avoids the love-and-marriage plot.

Mercator eliminates Pasicompsa’s recognition as a citizen from Philemon’s Greek original (Lefèvre 1995; James 2010; contra, Dunsch 2014). As Lefèvre has suggested, Plautus

changed Philemon's Greek original precisely to remove both *anagnorisis* and wedding. In this play, the feckless Charinus returns from two years abroad doing business for the family. He has brought a beautiful concubine, purchased shortly after his departure from home. Afraid to tell his father Demipho that Pasicompsa is his, he says she is a gift for his mother. Demipho falls for her on sight, and engages a bidding war with his son, having forbidden the use of her as *ancilla* in the house (she is too delicate for the necessary hard work and regular beatings that are the lot of a domestic female slave; see James 2012). Charinus caves in to his father's *potestas* (paternal power and authority) and cedes Pasicompsa. Demipho gets his neighbor Lysimachus to house her temporarily, while he arranges to rent a place for her and hires a cook for a celebratory banquet. Lysimachus's wife Dorippa, scenting the nefarious situation, returns unexpectedly from the country. She learns that a young woman, obviously a *meretrix*, is sitting in her own house. Arguing with Lysimachus, she threatens a divorce that her husband does not want. Their son Eutyclus clears everything up, and Demipho is forced to return Pasicompsa to his son.

Mercator raises the specter of marriage when Pasicompsa describes her relationship with Charinus: considering the two of them effectively bound in wedlock, she uses terms appropriate for citizen marriage (536–537). But as Lefèvre has argued, Plautus has removed the natural occasion of recognition: in Philemon's original, Pasicompsa's tokens would have identified her as Dorippa's long-lost daughter, a discovery that would permit her to be married to Chalinus. Plautus's textual surgery here is structurally the same one practiced in *Casina*: eliminating an indoor recognition scene among women to stage the humiliation of the *senex amator* instead. In *Mercator*, once again, Plautus has removed the possibility of marriage. In so doing, he exerts a form of social realism upon his genre, for no young woman could realistically be kept for future sexual service without experiencing some form of sex. The miraculously virginal pseudo-*meretrix* is a fantasy (James Forthcoming), and here Plautus implicitly marks that fantastical plot, common to New Comedy, as impossible. He leaves a bleak future awaiting Pasicompsa, rather than rescuing her into citizen safety, marriage, and motherhood: at some point, Charinus will have to marry. And because the audience has seen him betray her, the play has already predicted her dismal future (James 2010).

The very unusual *Persa* should not, from one perspective, be a subject for discussion here, as its plot takes place among slaves. The young slave Toxilus, madly in love with the *meretrix* Lemniselenis, manages to buy her freedom with the help of his friend Sagaristio and the impoverished citizen father Saturio, who allows his daughter to be disguised as a newly arrived Persian war captive in a plot to get Lemniselenis's pimp Dordalus to buy her. Once Dordalus has paid for the girl, called only Virgo (=Girl), he is charged with violating the law by having purchased a citizen. He is thus defrauded of his money. Because this play features no citizen *adulescens* in love, it cannot lead to legitimate marriage. But as Virgo acutely observes, the plot to use her endangers her chances for marriage, as it puts her at risk of gaining a reputation that would put off possible suitors. No Greek original for this play has been identified, so it may be another Plautine original, like *Epidicus*. In terms of marriage, what this play does is stage the process of making an impoverished citizen girl unmarriageable (see Chapter 22, pp. 337–338).

The brilliant *Pseudolus* also features a plot focused on acquisition of a brothel slave *meretrix* for the *adulescens*. Calidorus, madly in love with Phoenicium, entreats his family's

clever slave, the titular Pseudolus, to find him the money necessary to buy her before his Macedonian soldier-rival carries her away. Pseudolus succeeds spectacularly; Phoenicium is given her freedom; but not a word of marriage can be spoken, as she is permanently a *meretrix*. At some point, she (like Pasicompsa of *Mercator* and Philematium of *Mostellaria*) will be set loose on her own, when Calidorus must settle into citizen marriage.

Miles Gloriosus and *Mostellaria* hardly need discussing – their love plots involve *meretrices*, so they cannot even hint at marriage. Since Philaenium and Philocomasium have had sex with other men, they cannot become citizen wives in the onstage world.

Existing Marriages

Amphitruo coheres with the marriage imperative of Menandrian comedy in showing a relatively new marriage producing a baby, but in every other way it is virtually unrelated to the rest of the genre. Its story comes from Greek myth, rather than a Greek neighborhood; that tale is of royalty, gods, and a future hero, rather than of a young man inappropriately in love; and the illegitimate pregnancy is accomplished not by rape but by divine disguise, as Jupiter pretends to be Alcmena's husband. *Amphitruo* is required to accept his wife's semi-divine baby, along with his own human son, and so the play ends with a new family in an established marriage. Its comic effects come from the funny scenes of confusion arising from mistaken identity and from the sight of Jupiter acting as a husband abashed before his wife's ire.

Of *Menaechmi*, little need be said: marriage is of interest to this famous play, perhaps best known from Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, only for the purposes of comic antagonism. Menaechmus of Epidamnus is unhappily married. When his long-lost twin brother comes to town looking for him, numerous comic misunderstandings ensue. Once the confusion is cleared up, the two brothers determine to return to Syracuse, their hometown. Epidamnian Menaechmus decides to sell all his property, including his wife (1160), an unkind joking formulation for divorce, something she has already threatened. This play does not merely avoid a wedding – it actually dissolves a new marriage of young people (he and his wife Matrona have not been married long). The family united in *Menaechmi* is a natal family rather than a new union (see Witzke 2018). Whatever its Greek original (possibly by Menander) did, it seems unlikely that it was as cynical about citizen marriage as *Menaechmi*. I suspect that a Menandrian original would have moved Epidamnian Menaechmus back to his natal home in Syracuse, along with his young wife.

Finally, *Stichus*, one of Plautus's odder works: it has three separate plots, in one of which two young marriages are saved from divorce, but it cannot be said to focus on love, let alone procreation. The sisters Panegyris and Soror (Sister) have been resisting the demands of their father Antipho to divorce their long-missing husbands. After they return from their protracted business trip, Antipho tries to extort gifts from them, in the form of several enslaved *meretrices*. The latter part of this short play (775 lines) focuses chiefly on social subordinates – a parasite (a lackey or sponge-character) seeking a dinner invitation, and the arrangements of the titular slave Stichus for a party of the slaves, in celebration of his safe return home from the business trip. If the rescued young marriages in *Stichus* seem happy – unusual in the genre – they are not yet fertile. The play ends with a raucous scene

of drunken singing and dancing while two male slaves agree to share another slave, Stephanium, as mutual girlfriend; she, meanwhile, has a sideline earning money through sex with male slaves. Fertility and new citizen families are irrelevant.

Wedding Plays

Even in the few Plautine plays that do arrange a wedding of young people, the model of a happy young couple, in love before marriage, is barely visible. *Aulularia* focuses on the stage comedy provided by Euclio, whose obsession with his pot of gold has so endangered his daughter's marital prospects that their household divinity, the Lar, has had to step in. His assistance takes the form of motivating her neighbor Lyconides to confess to having raped her and to seek marriage to her. Although he professes to love her, he has managed to contain both his *amor* and his guilty conscience throughout her pregnancy. Indeed, because of his cowardice, she is put at risk of being married to an old man no better than her father, namely Lyconides's unpleasant uncle Megadorus, who prefers a poor wife to a wealthy one, on the grounds that a rich wife will expect him to pay for her luxuries. He plans to treat Phanium effectively as a slave, until Lyconides confesses the rape to his mother and begs for her help. Phanium, meanwhile, has borne their baby. This young family proves its fertility before the wedding, and Lyconides's passionate guilt, along with his willingness to confess his crime to Euclio, allow a vision of a relatively happy young marriage, in a classic Menandrian pattern.

Plautus's displaced daughters who grow up as pseudo-*meretrices* do have happy wedding stories in plots that fit the "boy-loves-girl" pattern. *Cistellaria*, based on Menander's *Synaristosai*, could almost be called sweet, though it features some strange moments, as when a *senex* starts negotiating for a rendezvous with a *meretrix* whom he believes to be his son's girlfriend. Selenium's mother Phanostrata was raped (in what Scaifuro 1997, p. 273 calls the "older-generation rape" pattern) and gave up her baby. The *meretrix* called Lena ("female pimp") in the *Dramatis Personae* took the infant to her friend Melaenis, another independent *meretrix*. Melaenis brought up Selenium, never telling her that she was an exposed child. Alcesimarchus falls in love with Selenium, who quickly returns his affection. They persuade Melaenis to let Selenium live with him, rather than take on multiple clients (as Gymnasium, Lena's daughter, does), even though the exclusive arrangement is financially disadvantageous.

Meanwhile, Selenium's father, Demipho, has belatedly found and married his rape victim, Phanostrata, staged only as desperately trying to find her daughter. As the play begins, Alcesimarchus's father has ordered him to marry a citizen girl (who, in the usual way of New Comedy, turns out to be Selenium's half-sister by her father). The miserable Selenium has come home to her protective foster mother. Eventually Melaenis realizes that Selenium's birth parents want her back. She decides that she must do the right thing, so she restores her beloved foster daughter to her citizen family, in an ending that ensures Selenium's marriage to Alcesimarchus. This play features two young people who have sworn to be married to each other, in the language of citizen marriage, and the endorsement of their commitment that is provided by her *anagnorisis* allows the viewers to expect a happy marriage that will, presumably, be fertile.

Planesium, the displaced pseudo-*meretrix* of *Curculio*, was brought up by the pimp Cappadox. Rather improbably, he raised her, as she insists to her angry brother during their reunion, well and properly (698: *bene et pudice*, in a phrase that guarantees both her citizenship and her sexual virtue). She has not yet begun practicing her profession, but has a lover, Phaedromus, who hopes to buy her before the soldier Therapontigonus comes for her. That soldier turns out to her long-lost brother, and upon their reunion he engages her to Phaedromus, in a scene that was fairly common in Menander but rare in Plautus. In a unique moment, Planesium is asked if she really wants to marry Phaedromus. Of course she does, and her brother offers the minimalist betrothal formula, *spondeo* (674; cf. the same formula from Euclio at *Aul.* 256, Hanno at *Poen.* 1157, Charmides and Callicles at *Trin.* 1163). The play ends not with a focus on young love but, as with *Persa* and *Poenulus* (below), a scene of hostility and threats aimed at a pimp.

Poenulus, based on the *Karchedonios* of Alexis, presents an unusual lost-girl plot: it has two daughters, and they are Carthaginians who eventually go home to a citizen life. Along with their nurse Giddenis, Adelphasium and Anterastilis were kidnaped as little girls and sold to the pimp Lycus. He has been training them for prostitution, which they are to start the next day. Adelphasium's suitor, Agorastocles, has plenty of money and no interfering father but somehow has not managed to buy her away from Lycus. She is desperate not to become a *meretrix*, whereas her sister appears to have accepted that fate. Their father Hanno, who has been seeking them all over the Mediterranean, appears and is recognized by Giddenis; Agorastocles turns out to be his nephew, and they can all go home to citizen life.

Rudens, too, features a long-lost daughter brought up by a pimp. Palaestra knows she is a lost citizen and hopes to find her family. Her lover Plesidippus put a down payment on her, but the double-crossing Labrax took her away, along with her friend Ampelisca, in a ship headed for Sicily. To rescue Palaestra, the god Arcturus raises a storm that causes them to wash up in Cyrene, where (naturally) her parents reside, in exile from Athens. Along with the love plot and the reunion of daughter with parents, *Rudens* is greatly interested in the rights of slaves, a subject that must be left aside here. After much alarm and a number of threats to her safety, Palaestra and her father Daemones experience the *anagnorisis*, and for good measure Plesidippus turns out to be a kinsman who can help the family be restored to Athens. The play ends with the promise of unusual celebration, a dinner to which even Labrax is invited, after he has had to accept half price for Ampelisca, who will be given in marriage to Plesidippus's recently liberated slave Trachalio.

In *Trinummus* a crew of unlikely fairy godfathers seeks to help a girl whose marital prospects are at serious risk. Peculiarly for a play with no staged female characters – the girl whose future is at stake goes unnamed – *Trinummus* is preoccupied with the appropriate way to dispose of a citizen girl in marriage. This unnamed girl is endangered because her brother Lesbonicus wasted much of the family's fortune. Their father Charmides left a large sum of money with his friend Callicles for her dowry, then went abroad to earn more money. In his absence Lesbonicus develops a conscience about what he has done to his sister's chances of decent and safe marriage, so he thinks of selling the family farm. His friend and neighbor Lysiteles wants to wed her without a dowry, but Lesbonicus refuses, saying it would be a disgrace to give his sister in marriage undowered (and bad for his own reputation, as well). Callicles enlists two other men to help provide her a dowry by pretending that Charmides has returned with money. Charmides does return and arranges to

marry his daughter to Lysiteles and his son to Callicles's daughter. Lysiteles is in love with the unseen girl, but the marriage of Lesbonicus operates only to mark his maturing process.

In contrast with these relatively romantic love-and-marriage plots, *Truculentus* – our final text – can hardly be called a “boy-loves-girl” play. Diniarchus, rather too old for the behavior of the *adulescens* (at 91–92, he states that he has returned from a civic mission to Lemnos, a legate on a *publicum imperium*, the kind of task not entrusted to *adulescentes*), is sexually addicted to the super-*meretrix* Phronesium, who is juggling two other men alongside him. He had been engaged to a girl whom he raped either before or after he broke off their engagement. She gave birth to a baby (borrowed by Phronesium, via a chain of female conspirators between the two houses, in order to defraud the soldier Stratophanes of money by claiming that the baby is his son). When her father Callicles learns of the baby, he storms onstage, determined to uncover the rapist's identity. Diniarchus overhears Callicles's interrogation of two slave women. When he is named, he bursts in, begging forgiveness and promising to marry the girl. Callicles rebukes him, then forgives him (after cutting the girl's dowry as punishment), and immediately treats the two as married: “get your wife out of my house as soon as possible” (846). This arrangement hardly presages a happy union, and the next scene puts paid to the prospect entirely, when Diniarchus agrees to let Phronesium keep the baby for a few days (872–880) and tells her that he hopes he can see her in future (883). Although this is a “marriage play,” it is not a celebratory wedding play. This playboy does not love the girl, and their proven fertility does not predict a stable family unit.

Conclusion

This review of Plautus's systematic avoidance of the marriage plot should have revealed the playwright's constitutional lack of interest in setting up citizen marriages, families, and social harmony. Plautus's plays contain many such perspectives, usually articulated by slaves, who regularly reveal the hypocrisies and lack of self-knowledge that characterize slave-owners and the upper classes. Such moments are rare in extant Menander. I have suggested here that Plautus's dramatic practice further involved major surgery in the form of marriage-plot removal and substitution of raucous, shocking, even sordid scenes that are utterly at odds with the marriage imperative of Greek New Comedy. To this survey could be added many moments of cynicism, sometimes brutal, about marriage and family life. All the elder-generation marriages are fractious at best, often hostile (see Chapter 22, pp. 333–335 and 338–339). Happy, settled unions offer little opportunity for onstage comedy, while arguments can be extremely funny (cf. *Casina* and the end of *Asinaria*), but what is striking in Plautus is the total absence of affection by older husbands for their wives, who – without exception – take their marriages and their family duties very seriously (James Forthcoming). Menander, by contrast, shows widowers still grieving their wives (e.g. Pataikos of *Perikeiromene*) and stages non-rancorous conversations between spouses (Myrrhine and Laches of *Heros*, Wife and Husband B of *Phasma*). But Menander's theater is ultimately interested in creating fertile young marriages and social harmony among citizens and neighbors (Lape 2004). Plautus's theater is not.

It bears repeating that Plautus is interested chiefly in the clever slave, in brilliant wordplay, and above all in stage comedy: his plays are not refined studies of citizen life but freewheeling comic portraits of social life across all classes. His generally exuberant theater has room for implicit social critique and discussions of justice, specifically as related to slavery (*Captivi*, *Rudens*). Family melodrama about young love pales in comparison.

Outsider status gives Plautus a different perspective on Roman society: on his stage, male citizens fail to recognize their own weaknesses (particularly their vulnerability to inappropriate sexual desire) and take a utilitarian view not only of slaves but of their own children and wives. Most of all, citizen marriage can never be as funny as the clever slave. Ultimately, Plautus is not interested in citizen society. No wonder he avoids Menander's marriage plot.

FURTHER READING

Most scholarship on the subject of marriage in Plautus focuses on the unhappy marriages of the elder generation, rather than on Plautus's lack of interest in citizen marriage: Rosenmeyer (1995) discusses the staging of the divorce formula in Plautus; Braund (2005) discusses marriage and adultery. Lape (2004) is required reading for marriage and Menander, the basis of New Comedy's marital imperative. On Plautus's drama as theater for slaves, rather than for citizens, see Richlin (2014, 2018).

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Stock Characters and Stereotypes

Shawn O'Bryhim

Anyone who watches situation comedies knows that their plots contain little variation. With few exceptions, they center on problems with love or on power struggles within the family, which must be resolved within the amount of time allotted to the program. Due to the constraints of the plot, the cast of characters is limited. Generally it consists of members of the nuclear or extended family, plus a few friends who play peripheral roles in the action. Each of these characters adheres to prescribed patterns of behavior. Given that these situation comedies are the descendants of Roman comedy, it should come as no surprise that analogous elements are also found in Plautus.

Stereotypes and Stock Characters

Two kinds of characters have recurring roles in Plautine comedy: stereotypes and stock characters. Stereotypes are caricatures of individuals who can be categorized on the basis of their most prominent traits. Theophrastus, a Greek philosopher of the fourth century BCE, described many of these in a monograph entitled *Characters*. A few (e.g. the bore, the mistrustful man, the superstitious man, the grouch, and the flatterer) appear in the titles of Greek New Comedy, which suggests that they played an important role in these plays. Some of these stereotypes, such as the thieving cook, also appear in Plautine comedy in supporting roles, although the miser is the main character in *Aulularia* (Lowe 1985, pp. 72–102).

Plautus and his contemporaries reserved the most important roles for stock characters, many of which they found in their Greek models (Wright 1974; Hunter 1985 pp. 59–82; Gratwick 1982, pp. 105–115). Ovid lists some Greek stock characters at *Amores* 1.15.18: “as long as the tricky slave, the stern father, the shameless bawd, and the charming

courtesan live, Menander will survive.” Terence (*Eun.* 35–40) adds the running slave, the good wife, the wicked prostitute, the hungry parasite, and the braggart soldier. Of his own stock characters, Plautus mentions the lying pimp, the immoral prostitute, and the braggart soldier (*Capt.* 57–58), which Terence supplements with the angry old man, the shameless flatterer, and the greedy pimp (*Haut.* 37–39). Horace (*Satires* 2.1.170–174) refers specifically to the young lover, the stern father, the pimp, and the parasite. Aside from the prostitute, women do not figure prominently among the stock characters, although they do appear in supporting roles as stereotypes.

Plautus’s stock characters were not taken wholesale from his Greek models, but were probably influenced by native Italian theatrical forms such as Atellane farce (see Chapter 1, pp. 21–23). Indeed, Plautus may have acted in these farces before he began writing comedies (Gratwick 1973). These improvisational performances featured the stupid clown Maccus, the foolish braggart Bucco, the old fool Pappus, and the gluttonous trickster Dossennus (Frassinetti 1967; Lowe 1989, pp. 161–169; Marshall 2006, pp. 5–7; Manuwald 2011, pp. 169–177). Because each of these characters was associated with a fixed type of mask, the audience could identify him at sight and could predict how he would behave before he uttered a single word (Petrides 2014, pp. 433–440). While Plautus did owe a significant debt to his predecessors, he also made modifications to them. Most importantly, he expanded the role of the tricky slave, a hallmark of his plays (Harsh 1955; Fraenkel 2007, pp. 159–72; Chapter 9 in this volume).

The characters in Plautine comedy are drawn from the family (including its slaves) and include a limited number of outsiders (prostitutes, pimps, and family friends). Each one has a well-defined personality. The impecunious young lover (*adulescens amator*) is a helpless youth; he must find money to pay for his lover (a prostitute), but he has no idea how to get it. His stock role is summed up at *Pseudolus* 232: “it’s no fun if the lover doesn’t act like an idiot.” The prostitute (*meretrix*) is often self-serving and money-hungry; her goal is to drain as much money from her lover as possible. The stern father (*pater iratus*) is a blocking character who inhibits his son’s affair by depriving him of money. The evil pimp (*leno*) is “bad, criminal, foul, lying, and impious” (*Pseud.* 974–975). If he does not get his money, he will play the blocking character by offering the prostitute to someone else, sometimes a soldier (*miles gloriosus*) who brags about his prowess on the field and in the bedroom (*Mil.* 1–77; Hanson 1965, pp. 51–85). The tricky slave (*servus callidus*) must formulate and carry out a plan to overcome the blocking character by swindling him of the money needed to obtain the prostitute for the young lover. He may enlist the aid of a parasite (*parasitus*), a character that flatters and jokes in the hope of getting a meal (*Capt.* 69–90; Lowe 1989, pp. 161–170).

Traditional Plots

The fragments of Greek New Comedy suggest that its plots revolved around family problems, particularly those involving the love affair of a son. Judging from titles such as “Maccus the Maiden,” “The Bride of Pappus,” and “The Pimp,” Atellane farce also dealt with family situations in which “mutual deceptions of the stock figures, trickery, misunderstandings and exposure are likely to have been prominent, their effect being based on

the stupidity and foolishness of the characters” (Manuwald 2011, p. 174). Much of Plautine comedy, too, revolves around the family. Generally, its plots follow a standard pattern: a helpless young man falls in love with a prostitute but does not have sufficient funds to prevent her pimp from selling her to a rival, often a bombastic soldier. The young man turns to his tricky slave for help. The slave must find a way to swindle someone – usually either the young man’s father or the pimp himself – out of a substantial amount of money so that his young master can either buy her favors for a year or free her permanently (cf. Chapter 7, pp. 111–116). In the end, the tricky slave succeeds, the blocking character (the father or the pimp) is defeated, the young man gets the girl, and the audience gets a happy ending.

Given the limited cast of stock characters and the limitations of the traditional plot, it might seem that the audience would have tired of seeing essentially the same thing on stage again and again. But this was not the case. The Romans rated Plautus’s comedies highly and enjoyed seeing revivals of his plays long after his death (*Cas.* 11–15). For them, predictability was not a flaw. They derived pleasure from waiting for the inevitable to happen, as do the audiences for formulaic horror films. Plautus’s audience would also have enjoyed seeing how the playwright found original ways to bring about the prescribed happy ending by temporarily freeing stock characters from their traditional roles.

In several Plautine comedies, a stock character attempts to leave his traditional role and adopt the behavior of another. Thereupon, other stock characters begin to leave their appropriate roles, thereby shifting the comedic paradigm. If this situation is not rectified, the social structure of the Plautine world will come crashing down. As Leigh (2004, p. 301) observes:

Greek and Roman New Comedy has rules, and, however much room it may give to, however much pleasure it may take in, the representation of unruly behavior, there are fundamental generic controls over what a character may do, with whom he may do it, and for how long.

Something must happen to force the errant character back into his appropriate role so that comic society can stabilize and the play can come to the conclusion required by tradition.

This shift occurs most frequently in the case of the stern father, a stock character whose role in the play is to block his son’s affair because it is financially ruinous and because it is stunting his development into a mature adult. Occasionally these fathers have another motivation for their behavior: they want the woman for themselves. When this happens, the father takes on characteristics of the young lover and becomes the romantic rival of his own son, thereby spawning a mutation of the stock character of the stern father. When he abandons his role as the strong and respectable leader of his family in order to play the hybrid part of the old lover (*senex amator*), he creates a power vacuum that throws the traditional structure of the family into disarray (Ryder 1984). Characters that would normally be subordinate to the *paterfamilias* gain power over him. Order does not return until he is forced to revert to his stock role at the conclusion of the play.

These subordinate characters who take control are often female, and many are presented in a positive light (*Aulularia*, *Cistellaria*, *Epidicus*, *Stichus*). But in the “old lover” plays (*Asinaria*, *Casina*, and *Mercator*), the wife is a domineering character. In *Asinaria*, Artemona’s large dowry gives her great power over her husband. She thwarts his plans and

singlehandedly forces him back into his stock role. In *Mercator*, the wife of the old lover does not appear onstage and the audience is told almost nothing about her. However, the wife of his surrogate has a large dowry and she inspires fear in her husband. In *Casina*, Cleostrata's husband complains that he sold his authority for a dowry and, instead of laying down the law, he submits to a lot drawing to resolve their disagreement. While all of these women are formidable figures, it is not their dowries alone that give them power. Rather, it is the willingness of their husbands to give up the leading role in the family in order to play the part of the young lover. By doing so, they leave a power vacuum that their wives fill until their husbands are forced to return to their proper role in the family. Thus, the domineering wife is just as much a perversion of a stock character as the old lover.

In these "old lover" plays, Plautus also manipulates the role of the prostitute, whose motives are no longer financial. In *Asinaria*, the *meretrix* appears to have a genuine attachment to her lover; Plautus transfers the bad characteristics of the stock character to her mother, who is also her pimp. In *Mercator*, the attractive slave woman is loyal to the young lover who purchased her for himself while on a trading expedition. And in *Casina*, the eponymous young woman, who does not even appear in the play, was adopted by the old lover's wife as an infant and grew up in his house. In all of these plays, Plautus portrays female characters in ways that make the old lover appear to be less sympathetic than if he had simply made advances on a greedy prostitute. Instead, he is making advances on his son's true love, his son's property, or his own surrogate daughter.

The old lover's rejection of the role of the stern father has serious consequences. In *Mercator*, his actions nearly destroy his neighbor's family and threaten to extinguish the future of his own when his son decides to go into permanent exile. In *Asinaria*, his abrogation of his proper role in the family causes confusion: the identity of the tricky slave is uncertain, his son is humiliated as though he were the blocking character, and his wife assumes the role of authority figure. Worst of all is the upheaval in *Casina*, where his slaves gain the upper hand as he gradually sinks to the lowest social rank, while the women take control (Forehand 1973; Slater 1985; O'Bryhim 1989; Franko 2001; Chapter 10 in this volume). At the end of the play, all of these fathers must resume their stock roles so that the family – and comic society – can be reintegrated.

The only stock character that is expected to take on another role, at least temporarily, is the tricky slave. In order to swindle the blocking character out of the money to purchase his young master's lover, he must formulate a deception that sometimes requires him to pass himself off as someone else so that the play can come to the appropriate conclusion. In this case, there is no threat to comic society. The tricky slaves (aside from Epidicus) do not permanently alter their position in the family. At the end of the plays, they remain slaves, prepared to dupe their masters again tomorrow, as Tranio claims at the close of *Mostellaria* (1178). The genre encourages their reversion to the status quo.

Case Study: *Captivi*

While the traditional plot of Plautine comedy does allow for some variation, certain features must be retained. Most importantly, all of the stock characters must play their appropriate roles by the end of the play. Anything less would destroy the fabric of comic society and

leave the audience disoriented and disconcerted. *Captivi*, the most unusual of Plautus's comedies, adheres to these rules, while illustrating how novel themes can be adapted to a traditional format.

Plautus claims that this play contains neither stock characters (pimp, prostitute, braggart soldier; 55–58) nor traditional plot elements (titillation, love affair, supposititious children, misappropriation of funds, a young lover freeing a prostitute without his father's knowledge; 1029–1032). This play has no female characters at all, thus precluding the love story that lies at the heart of most other Plautine comedies. Instead, *Captivi* revolves around a father's desire to be reunited with his son and mutual loyalty between two young men.

An Aetolian named Hegio has two sons. One was kidnapped while still a young child by a runaway slave and appears to have been written off as irretrievably lost. The other was recently captured in a war against the Eleans. Hegio has been buying Elean captives for a prisoner exchange with the goal of repatriating his son. At the beginning of the play, he brings two new captives to his house: the young Philocrates and his lifelong slave and age-mate, Tyndarus. After learning of Hegio's plan to send Tyndarus to Philocrates's father in Elis with an offer to exchange their respective sons, they decide to trade roles: Philocrates will play the slave and Tyndarus will play the master. In this way, Philocrates can go home immediately instead of waiting for Tyndarus to return from Elis with a response from his father. Thinking that Tyndarus is Philocrates, Hegio sends the real Philocrates back to Elis. After he departs, Hegio brings home another Elean captive named Aristophontes, a friend of Philocrates. Even though Tyndarus hints as strongly as possible to Aristophontes that he and Philocrates have exchanged places, the dimwit does not get the message. Aristophontes tells Hegio that the man he thinks is Philocrates is really the slave Tyndarus. Angered that he may have lost a second son to the malignity of a slave, Hegio sends Tyndarus to the mines as punishment for this deception. Some time afterward, Philocrates returns with Hegio's captive son, who brings with him Stalagmus, the runaway slave who had stolen his other son 20 years earlier. Hegio is so overjoyed that he sends for Tyndarus with the intention of giving him to Philocrates. Under questioning, Stalagmus reveals that Tyndarus is really Hegio's son, whom he had kidnapped 20 years ago. The family is reunited and Tyndarus's chains are transferred to the malevolent Stalagmus.

Inasmuch as this play deals with the fates of two sons, *Captivi* has a double plot. Both contain variations on stock situations that have been substantially reconfigured. In the first plot, Hegio's son has been captured in battle and sold into slavery, much like the freeborn girls who are kidnapped and sold to pimps in other Plautine comedies. Hegio must find the wherewithal to recover him, just as the young lover must find sufficient funds to keep his girlfriend out of the clutches of a rival. For Hegio, this rival is the Elean who now owns his son, and the payment is Philocrates. Indeed, the security agreed upon for Philocrates's return is 20 minae (380–381), the price paid for most prostitutes in Plautus.

Since Hegio is functionally equivalent to the young lover, he should use a tricky slave to acquire the money to ransom his son, who stands in for the kidnapped girl. But there is no need for a tricky slave because Hegio already possesses the means of exchange: Philocrates. Tyndarus must simply go to Elis, inform Philocrates's father of the terms of the exchange, and everything will work out. Obviously, this does not have the makings

of an interesting play of any kind, much less a comedy. There is no tension, no unexpected turn of events, no recognition scene. If Plautus does not inject some sort of problem into the play, his audience will be deeply disappointed.

This problem is contained in the second plot, where Hegio is at risk of causing the death of Tyndarus in the mines before recognizing him as his long-lost son. Like the first plot, this one contains many stock elements, albeit in an unfamiliar form. A runaway slave kidnapped Tyndarus when he was a young boy, just as young girls in Plautine comedy are sometimes kidnapped, sold to a pimp, and brought up to be prostitutes. Plautus suggests that Tyndarus may have been destined for a similar fate when Stalagmus reveals that he was called "Paegnium" after his abduction (984), a name often applied to slave boys who are used by their masters for sex (Plut. *Ant.* 49; Leigh 2004, p. 91). This background led McCarthy (2000, pp. 175–176) to identify Tyndarus as an *ersatz* prostitute, the slave-dealing Hegio as the pimp "whose control over the *pseudo-meretrix* is as unsanctioned as it is unromantic," and Philocrates as the young lover who must save him from the pimp. Plautine comedies sometimes end with the revelation that the prostitute, who has not yet embarked upon her trade, is truly a freeborn woman who can lawfully marry her lover (*Cur.* 698–700, *Poen.* 1221). Similarly, Stalagmus reveals that Tyndarus is actually Hegio's son and, therefore, a freeborn citizen. While the nickname "Paegnium" suggests that Stalagmus had planned to sell him as a male prostitute, the fact that his master changed his name to "Tyndarus" implies that he never functioned as a sexual slave. This is confirmed by Philocrates's assurance that Tyndarus was brought up chastely (992), much like the girls who have been sold into prostitution in other plays (*Cist.* 172–173; *Cur.* 518, 698; Moore 1998, p. 186).

Despite Plautus's assertions to the contrary, this play is full of stock characters, although they are presented in unusual ways. There is a pimp (Hegio), but not a perjured one; there is a prostitute (Tyndarus), but not a wicked one; there are soldiers, but they are not braggarts (57–58). And while it is true that the plot of *Captivi* is not hackneyed (55), it is nevertheless a reworking of familiar themes. What makes it so interesting is the dissonance in the behavior of the main characters. In the first plot, Hegio has attributes of the young lover, a sympathetic character; in the second he has attributes of the pimp, a decidedly unsympathetic character. Hegio, whose name means "leader," is a respected member of the community, who cares about his reputation. The Aetolians congratulate him for obtaining the ransom for his son, he receives governmental attention immediately (498–504), and he worries that the townspeople will ridicule him when they discover that he has been duped (785–787; Franko 1995, p. 172). At the same time, this respectable citizen is engaged in a despicable enterprise: slave dealing (98–99, 129–132; Bradley 1987, pp. 114–115). His personality, too, is changeable: he goes from being a kind old man to an angry old man and back again. Hegio, then, is full of contradictions. This central character behaves inconsistently throughout the play. Because the anchor is not solidly in place, other characters are able to alter their stock roles (Franko 1995, p. 172).

The parasite Ergasilus foreshadows the fluidity of these roles immediately after the prologue. He begins by announcing, "the youth have given me the name 'Whore'" (*scortum*, 69; McCarthy 2000, pp. 182–183). This nickname flies in the face of the prologue's promise that no wicked prostitute will appear (57), although technically Ergasilus is not wicked. He is, however, a failed parasite at this time because he cannot find anyone to take him to dinner. Later in the play, when Ergasilus hears about the return of Hegio's son, he is eager to give up

his proper role as parasite (825: “now I’m not a parasite”) and gladly plays the part of the running slave so that he can deliver the news of the return of Hegio’s son as soon as possible (778–826). It appears that Hegio’s abrogation of his stock role has begun a domino effect that enables Ergasilus to behave in an aberrant manner, jumping from role to role.

Next, Philocrates and Tyndarus exchange roles. The prologue says that they “change clothes and names; that one is called Philocrates, this one Tyndarus” (37–38). Since costumes helped the audience to identify the stock character that an actor played, this line indicates that Philocrates and Tyndarus will exchange not only identities, but stock roles as well. The next line confirms this: “today that one wears the mask of this one and this one wears the mask of that one” (39). The mask is the definitive indicator of the type of stock character that an actor is playing. Because he has exchanged his costume and mask for that of a young free man, Tyndarus will now play the role of a freeborn citizen. Similarly, Philocrates will play the role of a slave because he now wears the clothing and mask of that character. This explains why Philocrates is described as having reddish hair, a characteristic of comic slaves (647–648; cf. *Asin.* 400, *Pseud.* 1218). Therefore, when Tyndarus and Philocrates exchange costumes and masks, they do more than simply impersonate each other. They exchange stock roles, thereby becoming different characters with different behaviors open – and forbidden – to them.

This exchange helps to resolve the confusion over who formulated the plot to deceive Hegio (Leach 1969, pp. 270, 277; Petrone 1983, pp. 56–58; Franko 1995, p. 159; Moore 1998, pp. 188–191). Although Tyndarus has been a slave to Philocrates and now belongs to Hegio, there is little to suggest that he came up with the plot. He does speak of “shearing” Hegio in the same way that tricky slaves “shear” their masters when they use deceit to extract money from them (266–269; cf. *Bacch.* 241–242, *Mil.* 768, *Pers.* 829). He also compares Philocrates to Thales (274–276) and praises him for his philosophizing (284), which is how tricky slaves sometimes describe their assistants (*Mil.* 386, 464–468; *Pers.* 622–635; *Poen.* 647–684; *Pseud.* 969–1037). But even though the prologue indicates that Tyndarus will be responsible for the success of the plot, it does not say that he created it (40). Philocrates’s description of the plot as “this scheme of ours” (*haec nostra fallacia*, 221) may mean that they will both play a role in it, not that they both conceived it. Indeed, when Philocrates lays out the plan and Tyndarus’s part in it (219–250), nowhere does he say that the plot was Tyndarus’s idea or that they cooked it up together. It is Philocrates who takes on the role of the director (222–228):

For tricks are not tricks, unless you take care of them shrewdly,
But the greatest evil, if it gets out into the open.
For if you are my master and I pretend that I am your slave,
At last there is need to see, there is need for caution, so that this is acted out
With a clear head and without witnesses, skillfully and diligently.
Such a great affair has been undertaken. In no way like sleepwalkers
Must we carry it out.

There can be no doubt that Philocrates is in charge here. He speaks confidently and forcefully as though he concocted the plan and is trying to prepare an assistant for the task at hand. In response, Tyndarus obediently replies, “I will be as you want me to be”

(228). Having changed costumes with Tyndarus, Philocrates is now the tricky slave who schools his assistant in his duties.

Given the fact that Philocrates is freeborn, it may seem odd that his plan works. In Plautine comedy, a freeborn man cannot formulate a workable deception because that is the province of the tricky slave. However, it is important to remember that Philocrates is now a slave. His status changed when he became a prisoner of war. Therefore, it is appropriate that he has adopted the costume and mask – that is, the role – of this character. And because Philocrates now has servile status, he can concoct a workable plot. Tyndarus, on the other hand, is now technically a free man, having returned to his homeland and family whence he had been abducted and illegally enslaved. As such, he can assist the tricky slave, but he cannot formulate a viable plot (Leach 1969, pp. 279–280; McCarthy 2000, p. 170). This generic norm explains why his attempt to persuade Hegio not to believe Aristophontes because he is deranged must ultimately fail. Even though the speech that he delivers before he attempts to deceive Hegio (514–538) is analogous to the monologues of tricky slaves, this does not make him a tricky slave. It simply makes his failed plan seem even more pathetic (Leach 1969, p. 280; McCarthy 2000, p. 192; Moore 1998, pp. 188–189; Petrone 1983, pp. 59–60). Tyndarus has taken a great risk in order to allow Philocrates to leave unharmed, but his identity (though not his true identity) is discovered, and he is sent to the mines as punishment, something that never happens to the tricky slave. Given his current status, Tyndarus simply cannot play this role. Although he was a slave when he was in Elis with Philocrates, he has now returned to the land of his birth and is a free man (Leigh 2004, pp. 57–97; Moore 1998, p. 183). Philocrates, on the other hand, who was born a free man in Elis, becomes a slave in Aetolia, which enables him to play successfully the part of a tricky slave.

With the return of Hegio's son from Elis, the characters begin to revert to their appropriate roles as order is restored to the comic world: Hegio becomes the kind old man once again and, presumably, will give up slave dealing. Philocrates has regained his freedom and, therefore, can no longer be the tricky slave. Ergasilus gets a free meal, thereby succeeding as a parasite. Hegio's family has been reconstituted and they can now enter the house for a bath (950–953), no doubt in preparation for the feast that often occurs at the end of a Plautine comedy. Thus, the first plot has come to a successful conclusion. However, the play cannot end now because the second plot remains unfinished; it has not yet been revealed that Tyndarus is Hegio's long lost son. After this occurs, all characters return to their proper roles: Stalagmus, the runaway slave, goes from free man to slave and Tyndarus goes from slave to free man. The family is now whole. Everyone has reclaimed his proper role, the social hierarchy is restored, and the play can end happily with the reintegration of the family and return of the social order (33, 130, 167–168; Thalmann 1996, p. 130).

Plautus's claim that *Captivi* is different from other comedies is only partly true. Many stock characters have appeared in this play, albeit in an altered form. As McCarthy (2000, p. 173) says:

Precisely by closely paralleling the progress of amoral deception in comedies in a play suffused with morality, the plot of the *Captivi* both declares its identity squarely within the Plautine tradition and yet polemically substitutes ethics for antics, and freeborn characters for slaves.

While *Captivi* does not deal with the typical love affair, it does focus on the love of a father for his lost son and bonds of friendship between two young men, both born free, both

temporarily enslaved, which accounts for its “chaste morals” (1029). As the epilogue says, “playwrights find few comedies of this type where good men become better” (1034–1035). All the major characters in this play were good to begin with and showed by their behavior that they could become even nobler. However, everything nearly ended in tragedy when Tyndarus was sent to the mine because he tried to play a role for which he was not suited. Philocrates nearly lost a friend and, even worse, Hegio almost caused the death of his own son. If not for the good faith of Philocrates, the only major character that played his proper role at all times, this comedy would have turned into a tragedy.

Conclusion: Stock Characters and Society

Although Beacham (1991, p. 26) insists that, “Plautus rarely tried to educate,” these plays did carry a message for the Roman audience: just as each stock character has a fixed role in Plautine comedy, each person had a fixed role in Roman society. Some stock characters are allowed to deviate from their roles for a while, but they always return to their prescribed behavior by the end of the play (Rei 1998, p. 104). In the same way, the rules of the Roman social hierarchy rarely allowed individuals to make large leaps up the social ladder. Events on the stage reinforced ideas about social mobility for the audience by portraying the consequences of violating the social system. At least some sectors of Roman society – and audience – were attached to tradition and so averse to societal change that the spectacle of stock characters trying to change their behavior, much less their roles in society, must have elicited a sense of the ridiculous tempered with foreboding. But the audience’s nervous laughter was always quieted by the end of the play, when these characters were forced back into their stock roles and the equilibrium of his comic society was restored. As Segal (1987, p. 7) said, “Plautus made them laugh. And the laughter was Roman.” Their expectations were Roman as well. A happy ending meant that everything had to return to its proper place in the fundamentally Roman city that Plautus had built, lest the plot – and the comic society represented therein – come crashing down.

FURTHER READING

For an overview of stock characters in Roman comedy, see Duckworth (1952, pp. 236–271). Wiles (1991) elucidates the use of mask, costume, and gesture to define character in Greek and Roman New Comedy. O’Byrhim (2015, pp. 449–450) discusses the use of the theater to reinforce the Roman social hierarchy.

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CHAPTER NINE

The *Servus Callidus* in Charge: Plays of Deception

Ferdinand Stürner

Since the days of Eduard Fraenkel (1888–1970), scholars have agreed that Plautus had a much greater penchant for slave characters than the Greek authors whose works he adapted for the Roman stage. His arguably most effective achievement in this field is the figure usually referred to as the *servus callidus* – the clever slave overcoming the limits of his unfree existence by cunning and trickery. Plautine comedy offers a broad typological variety of such slaves (Stace 1968), and particularly interesting is the case of the easily discernible figure that Anderson (1993) has called the “slave-rogue.” This character enters the stage as an omnipresent antagonist of social authorities and dominates the plot ad libitum as an unworldly master of intrigue. His task is always the same: supporting a lovesick young man in amorous pursuits by cheating money out of his incautious parents.

The *servus callidus* very likely was a popular stock character among Roman audiences. This chapter examines Plautus’s use of this trickster figure in four plays (*Pseudolus*, *Epidicus*, *Bacchides*, and *Mostellaria*). There is good evidence that Plautus possibly considered two of these, *Pseudolus* and *Epidicus*, major successes of his career (Cic. *Cato* 50; *Bacch.* 214). Although Terence did not concede similar prominence to the slave-rogue and clever slaves in general (Karakasis 2013), fragments suggest that other authors of the *palliata* rather shared Plautus’s preferences in this respect (Wright 1974). Scholars have often puzzled over this popularity. While the inversion of everyday norms and hierarchies is a common feature of Plautine comedy in general, the rogue remains a case apart. The possibility of unrest and insurrection tends to be a strong concern in slaveholder societies, and there are reasons to assume that the free spirit of the Roman *ludi* did not simply sweep away such feelings. Why, then, did slave-owners enjoy seeing plays that prominently displayed the intellectual superiority of persons whom they preferred to conceptualize as animated objects in real life (cf. Varro *Rust.* 17,1)? And why did the magistrates

responsible for the organization of the dramatic festivals think it useful to fund performances that might foster the feared insubordinations?

For a long time, E. Segal's "Bakhtinian" reading of Plautine comedy provided an authoritative approach to such questions (1968; 2nd ed. 1987). Comparing comedy extensively to the *Saturnalia* festival, Segal saw the clever slave as a convenient "security valve," gladly accepted by the powerful with the intention of appeasing resentment among the subordinated (cf. Lefèvre 1988; Döpp 1993). However, Segal's vision of the society and the audience for which Plautus was writing soon elicited alternative explanations. It has been suggested that the unleashed slave is a sort of metaphor denouncing the moral corruption represented by the other figures on stage (Anderson 1993); that his actions are meant to dispel the fears of slave-owners by integrating them into a comic plot that ultimately reaffirms the social status quo (Parker 1989); that his sublime triumphs respond to moral concerns arising from the daily business of mastery and cater at the same time to more general antiauthoritarian desires among the free and powerful (McCarthy 2000); that the trickster gives us a glimpse into hidden strategies of resistance among Roman slaves, but integrates these strategies into the framework of the official ideology (Stewart 2008, 2012); and finally, that the clever slave should be taken as a figure created by the oppressed for the oppressed, voicing their secret desires (Richlin 2014, 2017).

It lies beyond the scope of this chapter to offer an exhaustive critical appraisal of this scholarly debate. A few general remarks, however, seem to be in order. First and foremost, we should be cautious to link the figure of the slave-rogue too narrowly with the interests and mentalities of a specific social group. As far as we know, dramatic performances were frequented by slave-owners and slaves, rich and poor, men and women alike, and the troupes presumably also used the plays produced for the *ludi* on their tours in sociocultural contexts very different from urban Rome (Moore 1994; contra Fontaine 2010). There is nothing wrong, then, in asking what the slave-rogue might have meant to Rome's slave population or to the magistrates organizing the *ludi*, as Segal and others have done, but we should be aware of the figure's potential to appeal to all social groups within a highly diverse audience (so Richlin 2014). Second, most studies of the topic tend to read the rogue-plays as responding predominantly to concerns about the Roman institution of slavery, but this approach cannot be accepted without reservations. While it seems natural to assume that the trickster could serve as a foil for the hidden desires of the unfree among playwrights, actors, and spectators, the main proponents of the character, Naevius and Plautus, were not enslaved, according to our sources (so McCarthy 2000, p. 18). As far as the free audience members are concerned, not all of them were slaveholders. Although the system of slavery underwent essential structural and numerical changes in the days of Plautus, the transformation of Rome into a slave society was still to come, and the intricate processes governing the relationship between slaves and masters were hardly a part of everyman's daily experience. But even if they were, it would be risky to suppose a priori that the feelings of Plautus's contemporaries came in any way close to modern ethical stances. Their ideological outlook cannot be reconstructed with any degree of certainty, and I fear that some recent studies potentially obscure crucial differences in using modern analogies, e.g. Hegel's philosophy of the self or American slave literature, to make up for this lack of context (but see contra Richlin and Stewart's arguments in Chapters 23 and 24).

A play with a slave as a main character, then, was not necessarily a play about slavery in the world of Roman theater. The Plautine rogue-plays certainly were, however, plays about freedom, as the main character can be understood as a particularly effective variant of the numerous trickster-figures populating the realms of world literature and folk narrative. Typologically, these figures differ greatly, but most trickster tales can be read as moments reaffirming the ideal of human freedom against what the philosopher Hans Blumenberg has called the “Absolutism of Reality” (on Blumenberg’s theory, see Kirke 2018, pp. 42–56). This “absolutism” is not only determined by the aspect of personal freedom, but also by social hierarchies in general, systems of ethical belief, and the mechanisms of human psychology. If we want to account for the popularity of the Plautine rogue-plays across all layers of Roman society, it seems promising to explore the ways in which they respond to various factors constituting the “Absolutism of Reality,” instead of focusing exclusively on the aspect of personal freedom. Along these lines, I will discuss some salient structural and motivic features of the plot-type in question. It goes without saying that it cannot be the intention of this preliminary essay to offer a fully developed reading of the Plautine rogue-plays. I hope to suggest, however, that the problem of personal freedom enters in these plays into a structural and thematic framework revolving around the problem of freedom in a more general sense of the word.

Family Affairs

Intriguing slaves already played an important role in Greek New Comedy. Numerous fragments from various authors refer to the intrigues of slave-tricksters and clearly evoke motives common in Plautus. Since the work of Fraenkel (1922, pp. 231–250), scholars have tended to believe nonetheless that there was no exact equivalent of the trickster in Hellenistic comedy. In the extant Menander, the cunning slaves Daos (*Aspis*) and Onesimos (*Epitrepontes*) only vaguely resemble Plautus’s rogues. By showing these slaves as loyal supporters of their families and morally superior to their free opponents, Menander seems to challenge common assumptions about the intellectual and ethical inferiority of unfree people (Lape 2004, pp. 252–253). Admittedly, Menander’s preferences in two isolated cases hardly justify any general conclusions – especially as Ovid directly connects the *servus fallax* with Menander (*Am.* 1.15.17). It is rather the structure of Plautus’s plays that suggests considering the rogue a largely Roman invention.

In Plautus, the intrigues of the rogue never serve selfish purposes – they are undertaken in the interest of a young man who cannot gain the support of his father for his affair with a presumably dangerous prostitute. The dramatic complication that needs to be resolved for a true and proper dénouement does not primarily concern, then, the relationship between slave and master, but between father and son. This common structural feature deserves emphasis, as Plautus does all he can to gloss over it. In the extant Menander, intergenerational conflicts arising from love affairs are always integrated into a carefully developed ethical framework (Sherberg 1995; Lape 2004) and illustrate the pernicious consequences of missing or excessive respect for traditional values and moral attitudes. In Plautus, such ethically engaged family business fades into the background. As the papyrus preserving fragments from the Menandrian original of *Bacchides* shows, Plautus has cut in

his adaptation an extensive encounter between father and son (*Dis Ex.* 47–90) – not for merely structural reasons, as some assume, but because he was not interested in their relationship (Lefèvre 2011, p. 35). Nicobulus and Mnesichlochus never meet on stage in the Plautine play, and the same is true for fathers and sons in *Epidicus*, *Mostellaria*, and *Pseudolus*. Accordingly, their feelings toward each other remain hazy or are reduced to stereotypes. In *Mostellaria*, for example, the splendid expository monody of Philolaches contains some references to feelings of shame and remorse on the part of the young man (84–156), but such emotions hardly gain prominence in the highly rhetorical monologue, nor are they further developed in a significant manner. Vice versa, the fooled *senex* Theopropides does not seem to be very upset by the dire betrayal of his son, but rather focuses on the punishment of the slave (1162–1166). This indifference toward the intergenerational conflict goes hand in hand with a total neglect of the love story. The exposition of the play devotes considerable attention to the fact that the prostitute Philematium has genuine feelings for Philolaches (181, 187, 204–226), but in the end we do not learn anything about her future. There is good reason to suppose that in the Greek model these feelings indicated her noble offspring and foreshadowed her final recognition as the daughter of Theopropides’s neighbor Simo (Auhagen 2009, p. 189). Similar observations have been made for *Pseudolus* and – to a lesser degree – *Epidicus*.

The evidence supports the view that in Plautus’s Greek models the actions of the trickster were carefully and thoroughly tied both to the theme of domestic discord among the free and to the main plot involving recognitions, marriages, and intergenerational conflicts. Within this framework, the slave’s intrigues could assume two different functions. Either the slave supported the misguided aspirations of a young man and thus acted as a symbol for the antisocial qualities exhibited by his young master, or he supported the just cause of the son versus the father and thus exemplified an important idea of Hellenistic comedy in general: that character, not social status, defines the worth of a human being. In Greek comedy, the slave is a mirror of ethical conflicts affecting the free; in Roman comedy, he becomes an end of its own.

This development has important consequences for our understanding of the plays. First, we should expect that they somehow address specific sociopolitical conditions of the epoch around 200 BCE that could give birth to the previously unknown fascination for the trickster. Second, the relationship between Plautus and his Greek predecessors should not only be understood as one of model and adaptation. By preserving certain details of the Greek love- and family-plots and subjecting them to the requirements of the Roman slave-plot, Plautine comedy explicitly rejects a type of theater that conceives of the slave as a passive projection foil for the moral cosmos endorsed by the free in the audience and on stage.

Intrigues and Endings

Plautus’s tendency to shift the focus from the Greek family-plot to the figure of the trickster profoundly alters the nature of the intrigue. Most scholars seem to agree today that Plautus has greatly expanded the intrigues of his models, with the structural result that intrigues have been aptly described as perfunctory rather than functional, and cumulative

rather than consistent. The Plautine rogue tends to do more than necessary. On various occasions, tricksters proclaim how much they enjoy the perspective or the progress of an intrigue (e.g. *Bacch.* 239–242; *Pseud.* 667–693); regularly, they promise their help well before they have a proper plan. At times, the rogue even “makes his difficult task more difficult” (Lefèvre 2007).

Bacchides provides the most obvious example for this Plautine tendency. The title of the Menandrian model, Δις ἑξαπατῶν, seems to allude to a slave who deceives the father twice, but we count no less than three intrigues in Plautus. Many have argued that Plautus has added the third intrigue on his own, and it is notable indeed that only two intrigues find a meaningful place within the larger framework of the conflict between father and son, while the third intrigue has the only purpose of procuring some nebulous “extra money” (971–972). This step already presupposes that there will be no true reconciliation between father and son, which hardly is the way the play of Menander ended. A short reference by the slave Chrysalus to his disdain for Greek slaves who do not steal enough money from their masters confirms this view (649–650). In an earlier stage of action, Chrysalus has already induced his young master Mnesilochus to caution the *senex* Nicobulus by letter against his tricks (IV4). This step has a plausible psychological function because the *senex* does not trust the slave anymore after the first intrigue, and his confidence can only be restored if someone else is convicted as a liar to the *senex*. The execution of the plan, however, seems deliberately exaggerated: Mnesilochus even asks his father to incarcerate the slave (746–751), and Chrysalus paradoxically triumphs because the old man arrives in an extremely bad mood (772). Various scholars have pleaded for various reasons for the Plautine origin of such hyperbolic trickery (cf. Lefèvre 2011, p. 47).

Pseudolus shows a similar penchant for independent and excessive intrigues. Although he initially promises his young master to procure the necessary money as soon as possible, the exact opposite happens. The slave not only explicitly asks the *senex* to beware of his trickery (511), but he even makes a bet with Simo that highly complicates any further intrigue against the pimp. In a similar way, he deliberately invites the *senex* Callipho, Simo’s friend, to stick around and to observe closely all further steps (547–560). In this way, Pseudolus adds to the natural victim of his intrigue – the *leno* Ballio – two further victims, the consequence being a hybrid play combining the *servus*-vs.-*leno*-type of comedy with the type pitting a *senex* against a trickster. That the bet is thoroughly at odds with Simo’s initial pedagogical intentions and that Callipho never shows up again later strongly suggests Plautus as the author of Pseudolus’s self-confident propositions. Perhaps it is the true function of the second prelude used in this comedy (573–574) to underscore this original invention.

Epidicus is not as self-confident as Pseudolus but also has the tendency to engage in unnecessarily dangerous business. To procure money for his young master, Epidicus coaxes the *senex* Periphanes into the belief that he will help him to buy the beloved of his son and to get rid of the woman by this trick; in fact, he intends to hand over the money to his young master and to bring his old master a hired lute player instead. Therefore, he convinces Periphanes not to strike the bargain with the pimp in person (288–290). A moment later, however, Epidicus proposes to make Periphanes’s friend Apocides the supervisor of the deal (291–292). This legal nicety does not make much sense, as Roman

slaves were perfectly able to make acquisitions in the name of their masters. Accordingly, it turns out later that Apocides did not play any significant role in the whole process at all (410–414), which does not keep Epidicus from contriving a nebulous and unnecessary plan for how eventual questions of Apocides could be countered (312–318). It is difficult to establish whether such inconsistencies hint at a Plautine origin of the whole second intrigue of the play, as some think (cf. Baier 2001, pp. 20–27). Suffice to say here that they would be a strange thing on the stage of Menander, but in Plautus they successfully serve the purpose of elevating the triumph of the slave.

Finally, Tranio in *Mostellaria* also appreciates the dangers of an exotic intrigue. After he has heard of the unexpected return of his old master, the most natural decision would be to get the feasting party of young people out of the old man's house as soon as possible, a reasonable proposal made by the prostitute Delphium (393). But Tranio has the ambition to resolve the crisis without interrupting the party (394) and conceives the haunted-house intrigue in order to exclude the *senex* Theopropides from his own home – a remarkable escalation of the solitary intrigue.

The endings of these four plays, which often have been considered thoroughly Plautine additions, reflect the penchant for cumulative complication. It can be expected that in Plautus's models the slave was somehow included in the reconciliation between father and son; in some cases, punishment or reward might have occurred. Such affirmative endings, however, hardly fit Plautus's concept. He replaces them with scenes in which the slave triumphs over the free, and the outer hierarchies somehow adapt to the trickster's self-image. The finales of *Epidicus* and *Mostellaria* remain rather traditional. In the first case, the *senex* first plans to take revenge, then he tries to reward the slave by a manumission; in the latter he is eager to punish his servant, who takes refuge at an altar. In both instances, the behavior of the slave is highly paradoxical. Epidicus clearly shows no interest at all in either preventing the punishment or in manumission, and Tranio does not make any use of the help offered to him by Callidamates and continues to insult his master. In *Pseudolus*, Plautus introduces an extreme variant of the pattern, which he probably emphasizes by a remark of Simo (1239–1242). This time, the *senex* does not even attempt to reinforce the traditional hierarchy, but settles his betting debts without dispute. Allegedly, he endures the highly abusive treatment on the slave's part patiently because he hopes to get back a part of the money (1290–1291). This strategy does not make any sense, as Simo has no legal obligations at all toward a slave, but it gives the slave the opportunity to show lenience toward his master. In *Bacchides*, where there is no final confrontation between master and slave at all, Plautus frankly breaks with the tradition, and Chrysalus's reference to his neglect of a triumph emphasizes this innovative turn (1072–1074). If we trust Chrysalus's words, Plautus thought it necessary to get rid of a strained comic device; the poet also might have had the feeling that the theme of the slave's control over figures of authority has already been exploited to the fullest. In any case, the submission of the *senes* to the charms of the titular Bacchis sisters complements their submission to Chrysalus.

As Petrone (1983) has shown, conceiving of their own intrigue as a kind of *ludus*, a joyful play, is typical of all Plautine machinators. Nonetheless, the case of the slave-rogue stands out. On the one hand, the contrast between the trickster's behavior and the dire consequences that he might have to confront is particularly strong. On the other hand, the tricks of the slave-rogue hardly aim at a clear and realistic goal at all: the trickster will

only survive if the father somehow pardons his son and the culpable servant, but the slave's intrigues paradoxically move in the opposite direction. One could argue that this lack of a rational and teleological intrigue might well have parallels in the reality of Roman slavery. The various tricks by which a slave can try to escape the total control of his master are not only vehicles for improving his life, but also for safeguarding a basic degree of subjectivity against the constant danger of total objectification. From this perspective, slaves in the audience might have perceived the trickster's intrigues as an "apotheosis" of their own daily strategies. If the slave had to reconcile somehow the desire to affirm his subjectivity with the necessity to adapt, this conflict seems resolved in the figure of the trickster. Furthermore, personal freedom could only be an aspiration for the slave through an acknowledgement of the prevailing hierarchies, and freedom and subjectivity paradoxically had to be gained through a deliberate act of submission. Especially in the final scenes, the trickster hints at a dissolution of this dilemma. He exhibits immunity against the mechanisms which could ameliorate a slave's condition, but also secure his cooperation – money (*Pseudolus*), patronage (*Mostellaria*), and manumission (*Epidicus*). Such details show, then, why the trickster might have had a special appeal to the unfree (apart from slave-owners being mocked and deprived of their power). However, it remains doubtful how far a historical Roman slave could really identify with the trickster's total disregard of his own external advantage so evident in the Plautine finales. We can probably resolve this problem if we accept that the negotiation of slavery encapsulated in the figure of the trickster addresses more general problems of freedom. By making his slave a trickster out of passion, Plautus shows him as a person independent from the dynamics of social hierarchies. In everyday life, people act and react with the intention to improve their conditions and to secure their own survival; the slave-rogue, by contrast, impersonates the dissolution of this causative nexus and qualifies as an antithesis of instrumental social reasoning. This is the point where the character gains a deeper psychological meaning that makes it relevant to a broad variety of audiences across social layers and epochs. On the one hand, the non-instrumental character of his intrigues makes it easy for those exercising power to sympathize with tricks they usually fear and to free themselves for a short time from the burden of securing hierarchies; on the other hand, those subject to power have the pleasure of ignoring instrumental social reasoning for a moment by siding with the slave. It goes without saying that the two modes of reception are perfectly compatible and reinforce each other.

The Trickster's Skills

But if the trickster has neither realistic goals nor any interest in achieving his aims by strictly rational means, what are the secrets of his success? Plautus equips his slave-rogues with a stereotyped set of character-traits, but he also aims at unexpected variations of the basic pattern, which were crucial for the enthusiastic reception of his characters by the Roman audience.

The most important feature of the slave-rogue is his self-confidence, which he displays especially in topical set speeches dedicated to the celebration of his intrigues. Such speeches often abound with military metaphors through which the trickster compares his actions to

the exploits of successful generals or soldiers (e.g. *Pseud.* 579–593, 761–766; *Bacch.* 1069–1075; see Chapter 20, pp. 303–309). In other places, he resorts to hyperbolic comparisons from history (e.g. *Mostell.* 775–777) or myth (e.g. *Bacch.* 925–978); the language employed does not spare the spheres of honorable tragedy, epic, or the formulaic realm of official edicts (e.g. *Epid.* 158–160; *Mostell.* 687–689). Much has been written on these issues, and it must be borne in mind that the effects of the slave's bold language may vary greatly from case to case. In most instances, scholars tend either to emphasize the "Saturnalian" flair of the slave's grandiloquence or to stress the comic effects resulting from the incommensurability between the subject and the speaker's verbal pretensions (e.g. Schironi 2013, p. 453). Both approaches, however, need some clarification.

Comic effects certainly result from the incongruities inherent in the slave's affirmations, as exaggeration is a fundamental element of Plautine humor in general. But this hardly happened at the expense of the trickster. We cannot assume that the slave delivered his grotesque ideas in a serious vein, and there is no blatant discrepancy between the slave's assertions and his status in the rogue-plays. On the contrary, the outer hierarchies seem to adapt in the course of action to the slave's self-image, or at least prove incapable of preventing his undertakings. The bold assertions reflect the trickster's position at the top of comic social hierarchy. In particular, the remarkable predominance of military metaphors should be seen in context with the importance of military service for the social order of Roman society. It would be wrong, however, to assume that the bold language of the slave develops comic effects only as a mirror and a reminder of the intrigue's "carnavalesque" appeal. The slave's grandiloquence parades the mental fundament of his triumphs and thereby reminds the audience of the fact that freedom and social status are not only dependent on external circumstances but also, or even primarily, on a human being's self-perception. If the triumph of hierarchy over an individual means control of his self-image and subjectivity, the hyperbolic speeches celebrate the triumph of subjectivity over hierarchy. The laughter resulting from such utterances would be, then, a Hobbesian laughter of relief in view of successful self-affirmation, rather than a Pirandellonian laughter elicited by incongruity.

Despite his grandiloquence, the trickster's self-confidence is not adamant. Frequently, we find references to the fear of beating or other forms of punishment. At times, the trickster seems to undertake his activities only because he is threatened by his young master, and in difficult stages of action he does not hesitate to confess his *aporia* (*Pseud.* 394–405; *Epid.* 96–100). Such passages seem to contradict at first sight our prior remarks, but both aspects of the trickster's persona can be reconciled. The crucial question is: what worth would the triumphs of the trickster have if there were no dangers to be feared? As the characters of the play often do not qualify as dreadful antagonists, the slave himself reminds the audience of the potential danger inherent in his social position. This does not mean that the slave is in any way impressed by the difficulties – they cannot keep him away from his machinations, and at times he even shows the tendency of joking about the perspective of being punished. If Chrysalus in *Bacchides* puns on eventual crucifixion, transforming his name into Cross-alus (362), this remark is another example of self-aggrandizing slave talk rather than an expression of anguish. I do not share, then, the view proposed by Holt Parker in an influential article on the frequent references to punishment in Plautine comedy (1989), that such remarks were intended to remind the audience of the speaker's

ultimately weak position and in this way comfort their fears. Rather, Plautus confronts his audience with the idea that punishment cannot ensure definite control of subordinates, and he makes the spectators sympathize at the same time with a figure embodying this uncomfortable truth. In this way, some may have found their conditions less oppressive – and others the feared loss of control less haunting.

The self-confidence of the slave is intrinsically connected with an openly confessed and glorified disrespect for established social orders, values, and behavioral patterns. Anderson (1993) aptly speaks of the trickster's "heroic badness": to modesty, the trickster prefers gluttony and profligacy; to labor, the pleasures of an easy and comfortable life. Tranio best exemplifies these preferences in the opening scene of *Mostellaria* when he shows his disdain for Grumio, a dutiful country slave comically portrayed as a true incarnation of Roman rustic frugality. The notorious disrespect toward parental authority promoted by the slave and his constant mockery of familial and societal hierarchies tend to defy the ideal of piety.

Above all, however, the rogue's dedication to *fraus* (deceit) makes him a natural antipode of *fides* (loyalty), probably the most essential societal value of Republican Rome (Freyburger 1986). On various occasions, Plautine tricksters explicitly celebrate their taste for *perfidia* (e.g. *Bacch.* 226; *Pseud.* 578–583). Indeed, the usual behavior of the rogue toward his patron qualifies as a violation of loyalty – he not only lies to his master and embezzles money, but also cooperates in demoralizing the son entrusted to his tuition. Some would object at this point that the slave shows a certain degree of loyalty toward the party of the young people and at times even helps to overthrow outlaws explicitly characterized by a lack of *fides*, such as the pimp Ballio in *Pseudolus*. But we should not forget that the slave never undertakes his endeavors out of moral reasons. Freyburger emphasizes that full adherence to the principle of *fides* was not even expected from a social outcast who did not find much credit from his environment either (1977). Thus, the slave can permit himself a degree of social transgression that remains otherwise unparalleled even in Plautine comedy. This explanation, however, tends to overlook an important detail. The old men of comedy not only fall victim to the slave because of their notorious stupidity, they also cannot abstain from expecting a basic degree of loyalty from somebody whom they do not trust. This paradox is articulated by Nicobulus in *Bacchides*, who says about his slave Chrysalus (913–915): "That slave is very much like a sore eye: if you don't have one, you don't want one or miss it; if you have one, you can't keep from touching it." The dynamics of *fides* and *perfidia* between trickster and owner seem to epitomize, then, a basic conflict of societies relying on a foreign and unfree workforce: they are compelled to entrust important functions to persons who need not share the moral outlook and the behavioral code of their owners; in fact, they have good reasons not to do so. The anti-moral embodied in the Plautine trickster, then, accords to the Roman audience the pleasure of siding with a figure openly challenging the strict social norms to which each spectator had to submit. Furthermore, it draws attention to fundamental limitations of highly revered moral principles in a society rapidly transforming under foreign influences.

The superior intelligence of the trickster also finds its expression through extraordinary verbal skills. Such skills sometimes constitute an important part of the intrigue. Thus, the first intrigue in *Bacchides* is dependent on the brilliant narrative abilities of the slave

Chrysalus, and in *Mostellaria* Tranio's craftily employed conversation techniques keep the old men Theopropides and Simo from perceiving the truth even as their conversation often comes dangerously close to it. In a similar way, Chrysalus can make Nicobulus believe that the soldier Cleomachus is the husband of the beloved of his son even in the immediate presence of the soldier himself. Usually the rogues are better with language than their owners. They mix different idioms (e.g. *Pseud.* 443; 483–484), coin audacious neologisms (e.g. *Bacch.* 240; *Pseud.* 585; 607), engage in wordplay (e.g. *Bacch.* 248), or use extended metaphors and comparisons. The renowned repartee of the trickster also relies on puns in many instances.

It would be tempting to give a more extended account of the comic techniques employed by the slave in conversation with his master. Suffice to say here that his endless witticisms not only illustrate his intent to defy each kind of authority, but also effect an inversion of the normal hierarchies on a verbal level preceding and preparing the success of the intrigue. If the slave-rogue is more than any other figure in loquacious Plautine comedy the person of the word, this profile seems to evoke certain realities of Roman social history. Some scholars emphasize that verbal strategies were employed by slaves in various ages and cultures as mechanisms of safeguarding a certain degree of subjectivity against the pressures exercised by their masters, but it seems questionable to me that such strategies are the best *comparandum* for the blatant impertinences of the Plautine slave-rogue. More important is the fact that the promoters of literature and literacy in the Rome of Plautus's days actually *were* slaves and foreigners, and that the power inherent in the prestigious cultural knowledge of these societal outsiders certainly elicited concerns among the Roman elite. Bringing the slave-rogue on stage, then, means confronting the audience with such fears, and the reactions of the spectators to this challenge certainly varied greatly. While the performance brought the pleasure of approving and enjoying the dreaded developments, it could have reminded the non-elite spectators that even the power of those at the top of social hierarchy usually suffers from certain defects.

The traits of the Plautine trickster outlined so far show how perfectly this character embodies the paradoxical concept of "sympathetic otherness," which always entails, however, the danger of otherness supplanting sympathy. In conceiving the architecture of his rogue-plays, Plautus therefore devoted considerable attention to reinforcing the relationship between the trickster and the audience. Two mechanisms are crucial in this respect. They seem to depend on prologue and monologue.

First, Plautus takes care to adapt the foreknowledge of the spectators to the outlook of the slave. As we have said earlier, Plautus's rogue-plays in all probability are inspired by Greek models with a conventional recognition as finale. Holzberg's (1974) study has argued convincingly that such plays regularly began with a prologue outlining the complicated preconditions of the plot for the audience. As the characters of the play rarely have full competence in this respect, the task usually was assigned to protactic divine characters. In Plautus's adaptations, we do not find such prologues anymore, and there has been an intense debate in scholarship about the reasons. A possible explanation is a strategy of not conceding more foreknowledge to the spectators than to the slave in order to assimilate their perspective on the progress of action. It goes without saying that Plautus maintains this strategy throughout the plays, although the solitary crisis of the intrigue necessitates at times an informational discrepancy between trickster and audience (e.g. *Bacch.* IV 4).

Second, if the slave remains an outsider on stage, he has the spectators as his permanent confidants and constantly shares his plans and true feelings with them. As Moore has shown (1998), monologues play an important role in this respect. In general, the agitated comedies of intrigue are not very rich in soliloquies, but no other character in Plautus gets more direct rapport with the audience than the trickster: *Pseudolus*, for example, contains some 250 lines of soliloquy, and more than 180 of these lines are assigned to the slave. Furthermore, *Pseudolus* and his colleagues often have the privilege of turning to the audience in the mode of aside and commenting on the behavior of other persons on stage. If new characters enter, it is usually the slave who overhears their monological or dialogical entrance-speech, which puts the slave in a position of power and enables him to maintain his special rapport with the spectators. Occasionally the *senex* overhears the slave, but he rarely profits from the situation in terms of rapport.

If monologues become in Plautus an effective means of strengthening the rapport between slave and audience, this is also due to the mode in which the slave delivers his speeches. Scholars have often emphasized that the Plautine trickster acknowledges more than other characters the fictive nature of stage action – a phenomenon subsumed by some under the comprehensive category of “metatheater” (see Chapter 16). The typological range of remarks breaking the illusion or at least emphasizing the fictionality of the plot reaches from comparisons between the activity of the trickster and the poet (e.g. *Pseud.* 401–405) to open discussions of certain plot elements (e.g. *Bacch.* 1072–1075). The slave’s manifold allusions to the meta-reality of the play not only underscore his commanding position within the plot, they also invigorate his special relationship with the audience by according to him an otherwise unparalleled share in the extra-dramatic world of the spectators.

Tradition and Innovation

The features we have discussed so far probably were not only typical of the Plautine rogue, but of most slave-tricksters ruling on the Roman stage. Therefore, the demanding Roman audience probably took a much greater interest in the innovative aspects that a poet could add to the rather traditional profile of the trickster. Due to our almost total loss of works by Plautus’s predecessors and contemporaries, assessing his originality in this respect is an elusive task – all the more because many innovative aspects certainly arose from the specific performative context, which remains obscure to us in most cases. Much more research needs to be done in this direction, and the following remarks can only touch on some essential issues.

In *Bacchides* and *Mostellaria*, Plautus tries to win over his audience by a hyperbolic out-doing of traditional intrigue-structures in the first place. Although two intrigues frequently occur in Plautus, if Menander named the Greek model of *Bacchides* “Double-Deceiver,” he intended to advertise his combination of two intrigues as a special merit of the play. As we have already seen, Plautus added a further intrigue in *Bacchides* and thus transformed the Greek “double-deceiver” into a “triple-deceiver.” Plays with three full intrigues certainly were a rare feat on the ancient stage. In *Mostellaria*, the slave succeeds in depriving the old man not only of his money, but also of his home, which certainly was welcomed

by the audience as an unconventional escalation of the solitary deceit. Accordingly, the theme of the house forms an important *leitmotif* of the play.

The accumulated fooling of two victims simultaneously on stage lends *Mostellaria* its special flair and seems to be a thoroughly Plautine invention. After Tranio has turned away the *senex* Theopropides from the house where the young people are feasting, he must deal with the moneylender who provided Philolaches with the means for the purchase of his beloved. In this difficult moment, the *senex* returns suddenly (541). As various scholars have pointed out, this re-entry on stage is poorly motivated, which could suggest that in Plautus's model Theopropides did not return at all. The further development of action confirms this view. First, the *danista* pointlessly stands around for many verses, then the same happens to Theopropides. This looks like Roman, not Greek, technique: what counts for Plautus is the incredible cunning of the slave who aptly handles "two at a time." After Theopropides has declared his willingness to pay his son's debts, the *danista* simply leaves the stage – without clearly assessing the *senex*'s identity or asking for a formal pledge of payment. Even if it might be funny that a moneylender named Misargyrides ("Money-hater") behaves this way, it would be natural for Theopropides to walk off with the *dani-sta* to the forum and to restitute there the money to him. But Plautus retains Theopropides on stage in order to repeat the arrangement of the preceding scene. A few moments after the moneylender's departure, Simo – the man who allegedly sold his house to Philolaches – enters (690), and Tranio again demonstrates his skills in handling two at a time. In an extended aside, he extolls the simultaneous fooling of two *senes* as a particular merit of the whole intrigue (775ff.). It seems to be the Roman poet who draws, in this instance, the attention of his audience to an innovative element of the plot.

In *Epidicus* and *Pseudolus*, Plautus employed a different strategy in order to innovate the trite tradition. As we have shown, the charm of *Pseudolus* results from a combination of two current patterns of intrigue, the slave-vs.-*senex* and the slave-vs.-pimp comedy. Although Pseudolus accomplishes this difficult task, he remains a somewhat pale version of a trickster. For the deception of the *senex* he has no clear plan at all (cf. 562–573), and the intrigue against the pimp is made possible only by the sudden appearance and the incredible shortsightedness of the soldier's messenger Harpax. For the accomplishment of the deception, Pseudolus even needs the help of another slave-rogue, Simia (cf. the tag-team slave tricksters Libanus and Leonidas in *Asinaria*; Hurka 2010). I share, therefore, the view of Tornau (2004), who thinks that the hybrid name of Pseudolus ("trickster-trickster") alludes to his ability to trick the spectators into believing they are seeing an exemplary slave-rogue, although this is not the case. Pseudolus qualifies as the unique case of a trickster who also deceives the audience – accordingly, he includes the spectators into his warning against his deceptive nature (125–129). If the essence of the trickster is to sympathize openly with what we fear, this principle is brought to perfection in *Pseudolus*.

Epidicus is a double deceiver like Pseudolus and Syros in the Menandrian model of *Bacchides*, but he indulges much less in self-aggrandizing remarks than his colleagues (cf. Gellar-Goad 2011/12). Instead, he cannot come to grips with the boisterous Thesprio at the beginning of the play and delivers a long soliloquy describing his *aporia* (81–103). Perhaps such peculiarities can be explained by the fact that the trickster does not command the audience's attention in this play as clearly as Pseudolus and Chrysalus do. At some point, Epidicus simply disappears from the stage, and the focus of interest shifts to a

long series of comical misunderstandings and recognitions affecting Periphanes and his family: Philippides (2016) counts no less than six recognitions – failed and successful – in this part of the play. It is my impression that this rather unusual interest in family business at the expense of the beloved slave pertains to the comedy’s performative context. If even the modern reader has difficulties grasping all details of the intricate plot, this is at least partially due to the frenzied pace and unusually short duration of the comedy. Accordingly, allusions to the necessity of speeding things up occur frequently in the text (cf. Moore 2001). The need for speed makes tempting the idea that *Epidicus* was initially performed as a kind of postlude (*exodium*) and therefore had to meet specific requirements. Since artists tend to be unhappy when their plans are hampered by difficult conditions, perhaps Plautus took revenge by teasing an audience impatiently wriggling about in their chairs with a long series of false endings. At the same time, however, the unconventional step of relegating one intrigue to the play’s prehistory allows him to give an impressive proof of his artistic independence: In spite of the play’s shortness, he succeeds in pampering his audience with a true double deception.

Conclusion

To sum up, it is perfectly possible that the character of the rogue was originally created by unfree stage artists, as Richlin believes (2017). In the Plautine rogue-plays, however, we encounter a character that already has moved far away from such origins. For Plautus, it does not matter so much who his rogues are – rather, he is interested in how they act. As classical tricksters, they provide relief from the “Absolutism of Reality,” which constitutes the ultimate target of every trickster-tale. Several psychological mechanisms are important in this respect. While the stupidity of the *senex* accorded to the audience the pleasure of seeing mocked what they feared, the tricks of the slave gave them the opportunity to openly sympathize across all social layers with behavioral patterns and cultural codes normally suppressed or feared. The Plautine *servus callidus*, then, acts as a sort of antidote to what psychoanalysis has called the “authoritarian conscience” – the inevitable but vexing human urge to adapt to hierarchies of power and secure one’s own position within such hierarchies. Slaves are particularly effective in this role, because they can plausibly convey the message that the luxury of eluding the mechanisms of “authoritarian conscience” does not depend on social status. The finales of Plautine rogue-plays regularly show a *senex* willingly submitting to the power of the slave. It has been said that this pattern should be referred to the temporarily limited licentiousness accorded to the slave on the occasion of the Saturnalia. It seems more likely to me, however, that at the end of the day the *senex* dares to act according to his own hidden wishes. Obviously, submitting to the slave means experiencing freedom, even for those in power – on stage as well as in the audience.

FURTHER READING

Mostellaria and *Pseudolus* still have no extensive commentary addressing the interests and needs of scholars; for *Epidicus*, we have the thorough but outdated work of Duckworth (1940). Useful short commentaries are Merrill (1972) on *Mostellaria* and

Willcock (1987) on *Pseudolus*; Barsby (1986) provides the starting point for work on *Bacchides*. Raffaelli and Tontini have assembled instructive collective volumes (2001, 2006, 2010, 2013).

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CHAPTER TEN

To Hell and Back: Comedy, Cult, and the House of the *Meretrix*

Catherine Connors

In Plautus's *Bacchides*, after the slave Lydus sees his master Pistoclerus in the house of the *meretrix* Bacchis, he bursts out of the house shouting that he is emerging from the underworld: *pandite atque aperite propere ianuam hanc Orci, obsecro* ("quickly spread out and open up this portal of the underworld, I beg you," 368). In the *Truculentus*, the house of the *meretrix* Phronesium is also compared to the underworld. The young man Diniarchus becomes concerned when the lavish provisions he has sent to the house of the *meretrix* Phronesium do not guarantee him access to her. Astaphium, Phronesium's *ancilla* (female slave), tells Diniarchus that Phronesium (who is juggling the attentions of two other customers) makes no refunds: "For the account of what has been received at our house is written here just as it is in Acheron. Something comes in and when it has been received, it cannot be brought back outside" (749–750). In *Menaechmi*, a husband enjoys the idea of burning up a day on a funeral pyre by spending it at the house of the *meretrix* Erotium (152–154).

It is not hard to imagine all of these lines getting big laughs on stage. They configure the man's sexual activities as a parodic version of a hero's descent into and return from the underworld. It is also noticeable that they each appear in situations where the *meretrix* operates from her own premises, rather than being under the control of a male or female procurer (a *leno* or *lena*), as *meretrices* are in some of Plautus's other plays. As Witzke (2015) has shown, the English words "mistress," "harlot," and so forth frequently used in translating the Latin term *meretrix* do not map exactly onto the social roles embodied by Plautus's *meretrix* characters on stage. I will therefore use the untranslated Latin word *meretrix* (plural *meretrices*) throughout this discussion. Across the surviving plays of Plautus, several types of *meretrix* characters can be discerned (Duckworth 1952, pp. 258–259; Dutsch 2019). The *lenones* Cappodox in *Curculio*, Dordalus in *Persa*, and Ballio in *Pseudolus* are the objects of tricky schemes to extract trafficked young *meretrices* from their

control. The boastful soldier in *Miles Gloriosus* is the object of a comparable plot (aided by the resourceful *meretrix* Acroteleutium) to rescue the *meretrix* Philocomasium. The pimp Labrax in *Rudens* likewise loses control over Palaestra. Palaestra, like the *meretrices* Selenium in *Cistellaria* and Planesium in *Curculio*, turns out to be the long-lost daughter of a citizen and thus eligible to be married to the young man who loves her. In *Mostellaria*, the *meretrix* Philematium is purchased and freed by a young spendthrift. In *Asinaria*, the *meretrix* Philaenium lives with her mother Cleareta who, as her *lena*, tries to protect their livelihood by maximizing Philaenium's money-earning potential. The *meretrices* I will discuss below, Bacchis, Phronesium, and Erotium, differ somewhat from all of these: they live in their own houses, there is no mention of any actual children of theirs, and before and after the action of the play they continue to profit by deftly attracting attention and money from men. The houses of the *lenones* who are tricked out of their *meretrices* (in *Curculio*, *Persa*, and *Pseudolus*) and of the *lenae* who are trying to protect, in some ways, their *meretrix* daughters (in *Asinaria* and *Cistellaria*) are not associated with the underworld in the same explicit way as the houses of Bacchis, Phronesium, and Erotium. The pervasive imagery of death and the underworld in the *Bacchides*, the *Truculentus*, and the *Menaechmi* is part of how the plays construct the *meretrix* as an existential threat to men's transmission of property and identity to the children of their wives. This underworld imagery draws some of its power from mythic and ritual narratives that emphasize the material plausibility of access to the underworld (Connors and Clendenon 2012, 2016, building on Clendenon 2009). Studies of women's economic actions and agency in Roman comedy have drawn on investigations of women's lives and sexual labor (McGinn 1998, 2004; Faraone and McClure 2006) and illuminated the range of situations women are placed in and the strategies they can implement to protect their interests and households (Zagagi 1980, 1987a, 1987b; Hemker 1991; Fantham 2015; Witzke 2015). Associating the house of the *meretrix* with a portal to the underworld emphasizes or exaggerates the threat that a *meretrix* poses to a man's assets and at the same time deflects attention from considering *meretrices* as individuals with households, families, and economic responsibilities of their own.

The Bacchides and Their Underworld

In *Bacchides*, two sisters, identical twins, each bear the name Bacchis (39). The reason for this must have been explained in the play's opening lines, which survive only in fragments. The action of the play reveals that one lives at Athens and the other (typically called Sister in accounts of the play) has lived at Samos and has recently been brought to Athens from Ephesus by a soldier who has purchased her services. Perhaps the doubled names were the product of a long-lost abducted sibling plot as in the *Menaechmi*. Bacchis of Athens has her own house. Mnesilochus, a young man who grew up next door to Bacchis of Athens, has traveled to Ephesus and there become smitten with Bacchis of Samos. The Samian's services have been purchased for a year by a soldier who has just brought her from Ephesus to Athens. Mnesilochus has written to his Athenian friend Pistoclerus to ask for his help in extracting Bacchis of Samos from the clutches of the soldier. As the surviving portion of the play gets underway, Bacchis of Athens is asking Pistoclerus to help get Bacchis of

Samos away from the soldier. This will involve somehow procuring money with which to pay off the soldier. Pistoclerus is nervous about the entanglement and says: “Bacchis, I am afraid of Bacchantes and your bacchanal” (*Bacchis, bacchas metuo et bacchanal tuom*, 53). Bacchis of Athens explains that she wants Pistoclerus to come into the house and pretend to be her lover and protector in order to stare down the soldier and his claims to her Samian sister (58–61). Bacchis of Athens gradually convinces Pistoclerus to agree to enter her house and then says she will call for some money so that he can buy supplies for a nice dinner to celebrate Samian Bacchis’s arrival. Pistoclerus insists on funding the dinner himself: the exchange makes clear that the money flows from his household to hers.

Pistoclerus’s old paedagogue Lydus becomes distraught when he fails to dissuade Pistoclerus from his plan to enter Bacchis’s house. Lydus says: *O barathrum, ubi nunc es?* (“O pit, where are you now?” 149). Lydus’s outburst that it would be better that he should die than be so mocked by his pupil is broadly comic, and it alludes to Heracles’s killing of his tutor Lydus. When Lydus expresses his death wish with this word *barathrum*, Plautus also brings into the action on stage the physical, topographical, and geological structure that was at the center of beliefs about how souls could travel down to and back from the underworld. Latin uses the word *barathrum* to describe sinkholes that form in karst terrain and that can open into large subterranean passages. Homer’s Tartaros is a *barathrum* (*Il.* 8.14). Cindy Clendenon and I (2016) have demonstrated that an observational awareness of this and other typical features of karst terrain was at the center of Greek and Roman accounts of the underworld: any *barathrum* could plausibly be thought to lead eventually to the underworld, and myths about descending into and returning from the underworld are situated in terrain where *barathra* exist.

Moreover, the images that Pistoclerus initially used to describe Bacchis and the house as threatening also reflect the streams and thick undergrowth that are typical elements of terrain characterized by *barathra*. To describe his misgivings, Pistoclerus says that the house is a *latebrosus locus* (“a place full of hidden places” 56). In describing the hollows in the earth in the *Natural Questions*, Seneca says that the surface of the earth is *caecis suspensa latebris* “balanced over hidden recesses” (5.14.1; cf. *Aetna* 96–98). When Pistoclerus is about to enter the house, he says he is going to cross a swift flowing river, *rapidus fluvius* (85), and Bacchis in response remarks as an aside “something of yours has to perish (*perdundum est*) in this stream (*fluvium*)” (86). When Bacchis had asked him why he was quiet in response to her request, he compares the damage she can cause to what a thorny thicket can do:

Because these things are charming to mention: the same things are thorny in practice and when you take a risk, they dig through (*fodicant*) the mind, they pierce through (*destimulant*) one’s worldly possessions (*bona*) and they leave both one’s deeds and one’s reputation wounded (*facta et famam sauciant*). (62–64)

Because *barathra* are features of the hydrological system, rivers and thick thorny foliage tend to occur in nature nearby. When Plautus jokes about a river and thorns in connection with the *meretrix*, in a context that also suggests that the *meretrix*’s house is a portal to the underworld, he draws on a network of images associated with the *barathrum*.

After enjoying some time in Bacchis's house, Pistoclus emerges and meets Chrysalus, the clever slave of Mnesilochus. Pistoclus is ready to affirm that, as instructed by his friend Mnesilochus's letter, he will help Mnesilochus get Samian Bacchis away from the soldier. The words he chooses to express this contribute to the play's overall engagement with the language of death and the underworld, for he says that he "would rather dwell in the Acheruntian regions" (*regiones collere mavellem Accherunticas*, 198) than not help his friend.

Once Pistoclus's paedagogus Lydus sees what Pistoclus has been enjoying in Bacchis's house while Chrysalus was deceiving Nicoboulos, he bursts out shouting, as we have seen, that he is emerging from the underworld: "quickly spread out and open up this portal of the underworld, I beg you" (*pandite atque aperite propere ianuam hanc Orci, obsecro*, 368). He continues, saying the Bacchis sisters are definitely Bacchantes and introduces the idea that they swallow (*sorbent*) human blood (371–372). Lydus subsequently describes Bacchis of Athens herself, saying that "she is very fiercely full of blasts of hot air and when she gets her hands on anyone she swallows him" (*atque acerrume aestuosam: apsorbet ubi quemque attigit*, 471). Strong's recent discussion (2016, p. 31) emphasizes the way that the image of swallowing presents the *meretrix* as predator. I want to suggest an additional valence for understanding the imagery in these lines. Like the word *barathrum*, and the thickets and streams discussed above, the words *aestuosam* and *sorbere* each have a geological frame of reference that extend and develop the association of the house of the *meretrix* with a portal to the underworld.

In ancient accounts of the movement of water through landscape, *sorbere* and its compounds are regularly used to describe the opening of sinkholes, or *barathra*. Ovid uses *sorbere* to describe how rivers disappear beneath the surface of the earth in his account of the creation of the world (*flumina ... partim sorbentur ab ipsa*, "rivers are partly swallowed by the earth," *Met.* 1.40; cf. Sen. *QNat.* 3.26.4 quoting Ov. *Met.* 15.273–276; *QNat.* 3.7.2). These examples show that the term *sorbere* is used in a precise way to describe the formation of the *barathrum*, the portal by which a river flows into or out of the earth (Sen. *QNat.* 3.30.7, 5.13.1; 6.6.2; cf. Catull. 68 B 107–110; Stat. *Theb.* 8.141–142; Verg. *Aen.* 3.421–424). Such terrain is the basis for the physical plausibility of mythical and ritual accounts of access to the underworld.

There are also geological overtones in the word *aestuosas*, which Plautus uses only here in *Bacchides* and in a similar context in *Truculentus*. While the word *aestuosus* can describe the heaving currents of the sea, when it is used thus a separate word for the sea is also present (Hor. *Carm.* 1.22.5; 2.7.16; Val. Max. 9.8 [ext]1). The word is more commonly used to describe terrain or climate, or to refer to the constellations whose movement signals the hottest parts of the year. In geological contexts, *aestuosus* and related words can refer to underground currents of hot blasts circulating through or emerging from the hollows of the earth (*Aetna* 3, 73, 93; Symm. fr. 3.3–4, *Priapea* 75.1; cf. Pacuvius Ribbeck 102–103). Associating the house of the *meretrix* with swallowing, hot blasts, rivers, and thickets plays to the audience's awareness of ideas about portals to the underworld and reinforces their perceptions that when a man pays a *meretrix* he puts his very self in jeopardy because he diminishes the assets that make him who he is in his own home.

The idea of death as a spatial movement from the world of the living through a *barathrum* and into the world of the dead informs the use of the word *perire*, literally "to go

through,” to mean “to die.” The idea of passing spatially from one world to the next in turn informs Plautus’s use of *perire* and *deperire* to describe being desperately, perishingly, in love. Thus, when Lydus tells Mnesilochus and Philoxenus that he has seen Pistoclerus with Bacchis, Lydus is again using language that aligns visiting the *meretrix* in her house with traveling to the underworld. “Your friend has died” (*periit tibi sodalis*, 468). Here the idea of death is strongly enough felt that Mnesilochus’s quick rejoinder, in the same line, is “May the gods not allow it.” Lydus affirms that he saw (*vidi*) rather than only heard “when he [Pistoclerus] was dying” (*quom peribat*, 469). “What was done?” asks Mnesilochus. “Unworthily he is dying of love for a *meretrix*” (*meretricem indigne deperit*, 470).

The turns and twists of the doubled plot in *Bacchides* require that the necessary funds be extracted, through the cunning of Chrysalus, not once but twice from Nicoboulus, the father of Mnesilochus. Once that has been accomplished, Nicoboulos and Philoxenus, father of Pistoclerus, are drawn into the household of the sisters, where their sons are already enjoying themselves. On the one hand this is a chance for the sisters to make money on their own terms, but on the other, in part because the fathers are old, it has its awful qualities: Bacchis of Samos says, “I will do my task charmingly even though it is a hateful thing to embrace death” (*meum pensum ego lepide accurabo, quam [quam] odio est mortem amplexari*, 1152). Bacchis of Athens persuades Nicoboulus to enter the house with her by asking him whether he realizes that “if you let this go today, later when you are dead it will never happen again” (*nec, si hoc hodie amiseris, post in morte id eventurum esse umquam*, 1195). In considering the action of the play as a whole, Feltovich (2015, pp. 134–138) emphasizes the successful outcome of the sisters’ agency and plotting, while Fantham (2015, p. 100) is pessimistic about the future they look forward to: “These young women exercise control through their sexuality but their social position is weak and their eventual fates are grim.”

Phronesium and Her Underworld in *Truculentus*

In *Truculentus*, the *meretrix* Phronesium juggles three lovers: Diniarchus from Athens, a soldier Stratophanes, and Strabax from the countryside, whose fierce slave Truculentus tries to thwart her entanglement with Strabax. Phronesium lets it be known that she is looking for a child to pass off as the newborn son of the soldier in order to extract more of the soldier’s money. As things will turn out, the child she obtains is actually Diniarchus’s. The father of the young citizen woman impregnated by Diniarchus tracks down and reclaims the baby and compels a willing Diniarchus to marry the mother. Meanwhile Phronesium manages to keep both the soldier and the country boy as clients: in a parody of a dutiful (*morigera*) wife’s accommodation of her husband’s wishes she exhorts herself that “the will of each of the two men be deferred to” (*utrique mos geratur*, 961), and they enter her house together as the play ends.

As in *Bacchides*, images suggest that a visit with Phronesium is a kind of death, imagined in spatial terms as leaving this world for the underworld. As he enters, Diniarchus rings the changes on all the ways that an *amator* “perishes” or “is a goner” when he gets entangled with a *meretrix*:

If he once has accepted the cup of pure love and the drink has penetrated him within his chest, right then he himself is a goner (*periit*), and his property (*res*) and his trustworthiness (*fides*) too. And if the slut happens to become angry with her lover, he is a goner (*perit*) twice over, from his property and his mind at the same time. But if each of them is better disposed (*propitius*) toward the other he is a goner in his trustworthiness (*fide*). If he spends only occasional nights with her, he's a goner in his feelings (*animo*) but if he spends frequent nights with her, he has a good time but his property (*res*) is gone. (43–49)

Phronesium's name alludes to *phronesis*, the Greek word for “intention,” “good sense,” or “practical wisdom” (e.g. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1140b12). Describing her by name, Diniarchus says that she is a threat to his own good sense: “she's moved her own name [good sense] out of my chest” (78; cf. Fontaine 2010, pp. 21–29). Euripides in the *Bacchae* dramatizes precisely such a separation of a man from his *phronesis* when Dionysus drives Pentheus to life-endangering madness: “being in his right mind (φρονῶν) he would not be willing to put on women's clothing but driven away from being aware (τοῦ φρονεῖν) he will put it on” (851–853). The verb φρονέω is frequently paired with forms of ζῶω (“live”) in inscriptions (LSJ s.v. φρονέω): when *phronesis* is gone, so is life.

When Phronesium's female slave Astaphium (her Bacchic name is derived from ἀστᾶφις, the Greek word for “raisin”) comes out of the house, she warns the rest of the household to prevent others from leaving, to keep them from stealing household property. Diniarchus calls to Astaphium to halt her return to the indoors: “Hey, Astaphium, wait a moment before you depart!” (115). “Who's that summoning me back?” (*qui revocat?* 116) she asks. This is a standard bit of comic door business, but perhaps it also jokes about summoning souls back from the dead, since *revocare* is the typical way of describing that phenomenon (Cic. *Tusc.* 1.84; Verg. *Aen.* 5.476, 6.128, 7.769; Mart. 11.5.13; Plin. *HN.* 2.27).

Astaphium heightens the intensity of this exchange by saying Diniarchus is “killing” her with his summons (*enicas*, 119). As the conversation continues, Astaphium reorganizes the metaphor. Diniarchus is not summoning her back from the dead: he is seeing her at the hell-mouth because he is the one who is dead to the household now that he has spent all of his money on Phronesium: “While he lives, you should know a man; when he's dead, let him be at peace. I knew you when you were alive” (*dum vivit, hominem noveris; ubi mortuost, quiescat. / te dum vivebas noveram*, 164–165). Diniarchus reacts with surprise: “Do you think I'm dead?” (*an me mortuom arbitrare?*), but Astaphium remains fierce: “How could it be plainer, please? Before this you were considered the top tier lover, and now you just come to bring complaints to your girlfriend” (166–167). Diniarchus finally asserts: “By Hercules, I have not completely died, I still have farms and houses” (*non hercle [ego omnino] occidi, sunt mi etiam fundi et aedes*, 174). This persuades Astaphium to be more welcoming, but once Diniarchus gains admission to the house, she says “my mistress has uttered the funeral song (*naeniam*) for this lover man at our house” (213). The song may help along the physical detachment of the soul from the body (Aug. *Civ. Dei* 6.9; Dutsch 2008, p. 272). Astaphium affirms that it is right for a *meretrix* to obtain all of a lover's funds: “A *meretrix* ought to be like a thorn bush (*sentis*): whichever man she touches, right then (*profecto*) she ought to give him either trouble (*malum*) or loss (*damnum*) (227–228). When Truculentus complains to Astaphium that his master is

being destroyed (*pereat*) at Phronesium's house, she sets him straight: "no man is wont to perish (*perire*) at our house; they waste their own property" (*res perdunt suas*, 300).

Diniarchus subsequently watches Astaphium in front of the house and compares the *meretrix* and her household waiting for the soldier to "vultures (*volturii*) who know three days in advance when they will be eating" (337–338). He worries that "When the soldier comes, no one will have any more thought for me than if I had been dead and gone two hundred years" (340–341). Diniarchus himself seems unrepentant, though: if an inheritance (*hereditas*) came to him he imagines saving it by living sparingly, but he changes his mind mid-sentence to assert that in a few days he would spend it all – on Phronesium.

Hearing the door open, Diniarchus uses geological imagery to describe the house of the *meretrix* as full of hot blasts and ready to swallow victims: "But I sense the doors full of hot blasts (*aestuosas* ... *fores*) opening, doors which swallow (*obsorbent*) whatever comes within their bolts" (350–351). De Melo (2013, *ad loc.*) sees an allusion to the whirlpool Charybdis (itself described as a *barathrum* at Verg. *Aen.* 3.421). When Phronesium emerges from the house, Diniarchus greets her as the returning Spring: "See Spring, how she is wholly in bloom, how fragrant she is, how brightly she gleams" (353–354). The line surely proclaims his attraction to her allure, but could it also frame her as Proserpina, returned from the hollow passages of the underworld to bring spring to the upper world? Does Diniarchus's perception of the return of Phronesium joke about the experiences of initiates into the mysteries of Eleusis?

Phronesium's own plot contributes to the ideas that associate her house with death. She worries about the child she has brought into the house, fearing lest the baby's death interrupt her scheme (455–456). She pretends that childbirth put her life in danger as a prelude to demanding gifts from the soldier ("Greetings, you who almost finished me off from life and light," *salve, qui me interfecisti paene vita et lumine*, 518). When the soldier arrives, he asserts that he will not report his military deeds and says that military strength is more important than eloquence; in fact, an eloquent man is like a hired mourner (*pro praefica*, 495).

After the soldier presents his gifts, Diniarchus's slave Cyamus arrives at Phronesium's with the money and the food that Diniarchus is providing for an elaborate meal. The name Cyamus, the Greek word for "fava bean," is analogous to other names of slaves in comedy that signal a connection to food and food preparation (Seaman 1954, p. 116; Lowe 1985, p. 93). In a play making many jokes about death and the underworld, the name Cyamus may carry other baggage too: *kyamos* is the bean that Pythagoreans avoided. The exact reasons for Pythagorean ideas about the *kyamos* are not fully understood, but they may involve a connection to death or to the orderly succession of children to parents. According to Aristotle:

[Pythagoras] bid them to avoid beans (*kyamon*) either because they resemble genitals or because they resemble the gates of Hades... since it alone is without joints, or because it is harmful, or because it is similar to the whole universe, or because it is characteristic of oligarchy, since beans are used in election by lot. (Fr. 195, = Diog. Laert. 8.1.34)

An Orphic fragment also connects beans with the underworld: "for the souls of the vigorous, as they ascend into the light [beans] are steps and path up out of Hades" (Eust.

3.518.16–17; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 635 e = *Quaest. conv.* 2.3). On the Roman side, beans were part of rituals associated with the dead: the Lemuria (Nonius Marcellinus 135.15 M, quoting Varro), and the Parentalia (Ov. *Fast.* 2.576, Pliny *HN* 18.118, quoting Varro). By giving Cyamus this name, Plautus extends his jokes about those who pass through Phronesium's underworld.

When Diniarchus overhears Callicles being told that Diniarchus is the father of his grandchild, he exclaims "I don't know whether I am dead or alive, nor do I know what I should do now" (*neque vivos neque mortuos sum, neque quid nunc faciam scio*, 823). But, in fact, it is the child whose existence has been hovering between two high-stakes possibilities: a prosperous life in a citizen household as the son of Diniarchus, or life as a dependent in the house of Phronesium, a much riskier proposition. Phronesium enjoys the irony that Diniarchus has put his property and children in her safekeeping, and she teases him by using the language of *tutela* (guardianship), the legal procedure in which a *paterfamilias* appoints a *tutor* to oversee his property and dependents: "Look, I see the lover who chose me as protector (*tutorem*) for his goods" (859). This is the imagery of death: if Phronesium is the *tutor* in possession of Diniarchus's child, Diniarchus is the dead man. In a similar way, the final lines of the play, in which Phronesium bids the audience to applaud and says this play (*fabula*) is in the *tutela* of Venus (967), seem like a way of looking ahead to Plautus's own eventual death.

Life and Death and the House of Erotium in *Menaechmi*

In *Menaechmi*, too, a *meretrix* also operates out of her own premises. While the idea of the house of the *meretrix* as a portal to the underworld is not quite as explicit as in *Bacchides* and *Truculentus*, the play engages with some of the same ideas. Menaechmus of Syracuse arrives at Epidamnus in search of his lost twin, and hijinks ensue when wife, parasite, and the *meretrix* Erotium mistake the Syracusan brother for the Epidamnian brother.

Early in the play Menaechmus of Epidamnus leaves his own house, taking with him a valuable garment that belongs to his wife, and heads to the house of the *meretrix* Erotium to give Erotium his wife's property in exchange for the pleasures of her house. He invites the parasite Peniculus to join him. Peniculus, aware that Menaechmus's wife is angry, is somewhat cautious. Menaechmus assures Peniculus that all will be well because his wife won't find out what they do at Erotium's house. Menaechmus seems to introduce, and Peniculus certainly extends, a striking image of burning up the day upon a funeral pyre that aligns a visit to a *meretrix* with a near-death experience:

MEN. *clam uxorem ubi pulchre habeamus atque hunc conburamus diem.*

PEN. *age sane igitur, quando aequom oras, quam mox incendio rogam?*
dies quidem iam ad umbilicum est dimidiatus mortuos.

MEN. There's a spot hidden from my wife where we may do nicely and burn up this day.

PEN. Come now, since you ask for something fair, how soon do I light the pyre? The day is already halfway dead, all the way to its navel. (152–154)

The manuscript has *sepulchrum* in 152, which produces an unmetrical line (Gratwick 1993 *ad loc.*). Perhaps this indicates a trace of a scribe's awareness of the association between the house of the *meretrix* and transit to the underworld.

Place names in the play also carry associations with death and loss. The scene of the action is Epidamnus, and Plautus makes puns between the Latin word *damnum* (loss) and the name of Epidamnus, a town full of swindlers: "Because of this, they call the city Epidamnus, / For no one leaves unscathed, undamaged (*sine damno*), as it were" (263–264). Menaechmus of Epidamnus spends his household's (and even his wife's) resources on Erotium (*ad damnum deferetur*, 133) in a way that would typically be described with the word *damnum* (cf. *Curc.* 472, where wealthy husbands who bring themselves losses by spending on prostitutes are described as "ruined" *damnosos*). This same idea of loss and damage is at the heart of the comparison of a *meretrix* to a thorn bush (*Truc.* 227–228; cf. *Bacch.* 62–64).

The twins are from Syracuse (17). The lost twin Menaechmus was stolen by a merchant from Epidamnus when he wandered off during games (*ludi*) at Tarentum (26–33). Tarentum is certainly a plausible place for a Syracusan and Epidamnian merchant to be trading. But why *ludi* (games)? Wouldn't a market be crowded enough to lose a boy in? Plato describes the festival of Dionysus at Tarentum as especially raucous (*Laws* 637b). Broader associations with the name *ludi Tarentini* may also be relevant, for *ludi Tarentini* were celebrated at Rome. Rome's *ludi Tarentini* involved a connection to Tarentum, a descent to the underworld, and considerations of mortality and generational succession.

A spot in Rome's Campus Martius near the banks of the Tiber was known as the Tarentum (Festus *Gloss. Lat.* 479 L; Coarelli 2007, p. 263). It held a subterranean altar dedicated to Dis and Persephone and perhaps a sulfurous spring, and it was the site of the celebration of Rome's Secular Games (Livy *Per.* 49.6, on the celebration in 149 BCE). As Censorinus explains, the first *saeculum* began at the founding of the city; when the last surviving person who was alive at the foundation dies, then it is time for the next *saeculum*. The system of Secular Games is a powerful and subtle means of thinking about the limits of individual lives in contrast with the limitless-looking "lifespan" of the state (Censorinus *DN* 17.5; Feeney 2007, pp. 145–147). Valerius Maximus's (2.4) account of the mythical origins of the games turns on a kind of interchangeability between the city of Tarentum and the Tarentum at Rome. During a terrible plague, a certain Valesius had three sick children. Praying to his household gods that *he* could take on the danger instead of his children, he heard a prophetic voice that said he would have them safe if he traveled down the Tiber to Tarentum and brought them water from the altar of Dis and Persephone. After Valesius set out for the city of Tarentum, by night he stopped near the Campus Martius because the children were thirsty and he wanted a hot drink for them, only to find that *this* place was called Tarentum. The children recovered and reported that they had been told in a dream that "dark" sacrifices should be offered and games (*ludi*) held by night at the altar of Dis and Persephone. When Valesius made arrangements to have the altar installed, a subterranean one was discovered, and this along with sulfurous emanations in the area gave rise to ideas about the spot being a gateway to the underworld. Censorinus (*DN* 17. 8) preserves a remark by Varro that "*ludi Tarentini* should be held in the Campus Martius for Dis pater and Proserpina." Watkins (1995, p. 353) argues that the word *Tarentum*, especially at Varro *On the Latin Language* (6.23–24), means "grave" and develops from Indo-European expressions of the transit to death:

The Roman ritual for the dead at the Tarentum, “the crossing place”, is at the same time a ritual to assure the long life and orderly succession of the generations; it is a reaffirmation of the crossing of the *saecula* of a hundred years.

In Plautus’s play it is precisely this orderly succession of generations that the abduction of Menaechmus to Epidamnus during the *Ludi Tarentini* puts at risk, and that his own visits – and allocation of household resources – to the house of the *meretrix* Erotium threaten.

Cult, Identity, and Memory at the (Roman) Hell-Mouth

In each of the plays considered here, spending money in the house of the *meretrix* threatens a man with the loss (*damnum*) of his property, and the potential damage to his identity is expressed by pervasive language and images associated with death and the underworld. A similar combination of elements occupies the center of Livy’s engagingly plotted narrative of the Roman Senate’s suppression of Bacchic cult in 186 BCE (Strong 2016, pp. 47–51; Takács 2000). The episode repudiates the comic themes at issue when men become entangled with the Bacchides, Phronesium, or Erotium; Wiseman (1998, pp. 40–48) suggests the narrative may originate in a play celebrating the suppression of the cult. Young Publius Aebutius had a stepfather who mishandled the money that was to belong to Aebutius and decided to push Aebutius to become involved in Bacchic rituals. Aebutius has a mutually affectionate relationship with Hispala Faecenia, *scortum nobile libertina* (a well-known prostitute, a freedwoman, Livy 39.9.5) who lived nearby. Plautus’s young men regularly damage both property (*res*) and reputation for trustworthiness (*fides*) by their entanglements with *meretrices* (*Curc.* 504; *Epid.* 221; *Truc.* 45, 58). Aebutius, by contrast, is supported by the good little *meretrix*’s generosity (*meretriculae munificentia*), and Hispala even makes a will in favor of young Aebutius; her familiarity with Aebutius was “scarcely damaging (*minime ... damnosa*) either to the young man’s property (*rei*) or his reputation (*famae*, Livy 39.9.6). Alarmed at the thought of Aebutius being coerced into participating in the Bacchic rituals, Hispala describes what she knows of the rites and makes him promise to keep his distance (39.10.6–9). When the issue is eventually brought to Roman authorities, Hispala presents additional details of debauchery. The mention of matrons plunging special non-extinguishable torches into the Tiber (39.11.12) is intriguing, as is the description of men “fastened to a machine and brought to hidden caves (*in abditos specus*): these men were said to have been snatched away by the gods” (39.13.13). Both activities suggest some idea of plunging into the earth in a near-death (or indeed deadly) experience that bears comparison with other ways that mystery cults offered information or experiences related to the afterlife.

Comparing the house of the *meretrix* to the underworld is a way of depersonalizing the lives and experiences of women who charged men for sex. For Roman audiences who had an inkling of Bacchic cult practices, the metaphors and jokes about the house of the *meretrix* as a portal to the underworld perhaps also refer to death, rebirth, memory, and recognition in ways that also intensify the comedies’ engagement with consequential and transformative human experiences. As mysteries might offer an optimistic but non-rational

narrative that the soul could retain something of its selfhood after death, so too in these plays the *meretrix*'s house is a site of return – for some – from the abyss with memory retained and identity preserved: Bacchis of Samos gets to be not the soldier's possession, but her sister's sister, and Diniarchus's baby gets to be not Phronesium's non-citizen dependent, but his father Diniarchus's citizen son. Menaechmus of Epidamnus reunites with his brother and plans his departure from that “lost” city.

Describing the house of the *meretrix* as a portal to the underworld is a distant precursor to the onstage depiction of the hell-mouth in medieval mystery plays (Davidson and Seiler 1992; Schmidt 1995; Warrick 2006) and in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The influence of Plautus was not direct. There was, as Messenger (1936) shows, a continuous tradition from late antiquity through the medieval period of using Classical imagery, including the word Tartara, to describe the underworld into which Jesus descends in narratives of the Harrowing of Hell. Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* remakes the *Menaechmi* (Traill 2015, pp. 221–226) in a Christian world of redemption and rebirth. In the confusion caused by the arrival of the long-lost twin, each Antipholus undergoes a Harrowing of Hell-like experience. The Ephesian twin is arrested and held “in Tartar limbo, worse than hell” (4.2) and the Syracusan twin rejects the charms of a courtesan of whom he says, “it is the devil,” to which his servant replies, “Nay it is worse, she is the devil's dam” (4.3). Shakespeare beautifully expands and adapts the content and staging of medieval mystery plays here (Kinney 1988, pp. 38–45). But as we have seen, in Plautus the possibilities and dangers of an experience of the underworld already lurked behind the *meretrix*'s door.¹

NOTE

- 1 Collaborative work with Cindy Clendenon has had and continues to have a formative influence on my approach to ancient representations of geology and terrain. Working with Melissa Haynes, Malia Piper, and Lissa Crofton-Sleigh while they each were students in my courses on Roman comedy at the University of Washington has also influenced my approach to the plays discussed here; I have also benefited from the valuable advice of Sarah Levin-Richardson and Adriana Vazquez. It is a pleasure to thank each of them here.

FURTHER READING

Leigh (1997) establishes a framework and terminology for analyzing sex work; recent discussions of ancient evidence often use the term “sex labor” to avoid overlap with modern understandings of issues of agency in the context of sex work. Wide-ranging approaches to sex labor in Greek and Roman antiquity include Glazebrook and Henry (2011), Goldhill (2015), and Glazebrook (2015). Rosivach (1998) provides a comprehensive account of the exploitation of women in Greek and Roman comedy. Flemming (1999) analyzes economic transactions and issues of agency in prostitution during the Roman Empire. For archaeological investigation of brothels in their social and historical contexts, see Glazebrook and Tsakirgis (2016) and Levin-Richardson (2019). On mystery cults, Burkert (1987) is fundamental.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Wife in Charge, the Husband Humiliated: Stock Characters in Evolution

Barbara K. Gold

Preliminaries

Plautus's *Casina* was likely his last play, or was written very late in his career.¹ In it he takes liberties, employing some characters that at first appear to be typical stock characters, but that quickly evolve to confound our expectations at every turn, or even turn out to not really be characters at all. Take the title character Casina. She, or he, does not exist even for a dramatic moment. Her (or his) identity is masked by several changes and layers of gender and costume, and she herself (if there is a self) never actually appears onstage in the play. Casina is an impossible hybrid: a male actor playing a female character who never appears, but who is brought to life only by a male character (Chalinus) who cross-dresses in wedding garb to channel the missing Casina. The acts of cross-dressing and transvestism call into question the binarism that the stock characters employed in this play would seem to reject; although *Casina* is not the only Plautine play to use these ploys, the extended use of transvestism in this play makes it the most unusual of Plautus' comedies. The act of cross-dressing rejects binarism and duality of gender, and it represents gender as an unstable and relational term, a practice that creates characters who perform their gender and who change as they relate to other characters (Butler 1990, pp. 128–141; 1993, pp. 81–97; 2004). Thus transvestism is a strategy that Plautus uses to prepare us for the shifting relationships and expectations of the taxonomy of stock figures and the individual characters in the play (cf. Dutsch 2019).

Casina's identity is solely determined by and dependent upon her relationship with other characters in the play and their reactions to her. "She" is present in the imagination of Lysidamus, in the words of Pardalisca, and in the performance of Chalinus. Never, it seems, was a character so constructed, so transgressive, so complex a mixture of erotic and alluring but dangerous and threatening, so absent and present all at the same time (see Gold 1998 for hybrid characters).

I have begun with the character Casina because her constantly changing and impossible-to-pin-down identity gives us our first clue as to what Plautus is playing at in this comedy. We think that we can rely on Plautus' stock characters to guide us to an understanding of the plots and themes of his plays; they can be used, like myths, to trigger certain responses from the audience and to forecast expected scenes, relationships, and outcomes. The matron is usually a shrew, a nagging termagant who does not gain our sympathy (Krauss 2004; Strong 2016); the running slave is cunning and smarter than his master; the *adulescens* (youth) is in love with a girl he cannot have (until later); the *senex* (old man) is angry, curmudgeonly, and easy to deceive (Duckworth 1952, pp. 236–271). Such characters control the dramatic plot and presentation; they are the essence of Roman comedy. But, if they are the backbone, they also limit the playwright's ability to surprise by maintaining a uniformity within and among Plautine comedies.

Of course the impact of these characters would depend on their reception by different members of the audience. And not all Plautine characters act true to form; Plautus often rings enough changes in his characters to minimize predictability (see Chapter 8). We anticipate the stock themes and characters, and we appreciate the occasional deviation. *Casina*, however, provides a different sort of comedy and cast of characters, a canvas quite unlike that of most Plautine plays. While it is true that we find Plautus using some of the same themes in his other plays (transvestism in *Menaechmi* 141–146; homoerotic play between master and slave in *Asinaria* 700–712; warfare between husband and wife in *Asinaria* and *Amphitruo*), the themes are brought to a head in *Casina*. When our experience leads us to anticipate certain norms, such a departure as we find in *Casina* leaves us gobsmacked (Forehand 1973, pp. 233–256). Nothing turns out as we expect it to. The two main characters (Casina is not one), the *senex* Lysidamus and the *matrona* Cleostrata, act in ways that run counter to what we have seen before and what we imagine. Lysidamus is a lustful and uncontrolled *senex amator* (old man lover); Cleostrata is a rich matron (an *uxor dotata*) who does not kowtow to her husband (Moore 1998; Krauss 2004; James 2015, p. 124, n. 12; contra Anderson 1993, p. 105; the terms *uxor dotata* or *matrona* usually do not appear in the manuscripts, as *mulier* is the common designation: Packman 1999). Rather, she is independent, shrewd, unafraid to stand up to Lysidamus, and she even becomes a playwright orchestrating a play-within-the-play in an extraordinary departure from Plautus' other comedies (Slater 1985).

In most plays, Plautus sets up the plot in his expository prologue, normally a place that might explain to the audience the situation in which the characters find themselves as the action begins. This information is essential when the plot is complicated, when the characters themselves cannot divulge the details, and when the audience needs to know the facts in order to appreciate the ironic ins and outs of the comedy. Several Plautine prologues set up recognition plots (*Poenulus*, *Cistellaria*, *Menaechmi*), revealing the identity of the characters and preparing the audience for the denouement. *Casina*'s prologue is full of information, but very little of it tells us anything about the plot. Within the prologue (some of which, 5–22, seem to have been written for a revival of the play), Plautus, with his traditional *captatio benevolentiae* (1–4), pretends to tell us the plot of his play. Following his usual practice of emphasizing function and mask over individualization, he describes but does not name his characters: a *senex maritus* (married old man), his son (*filius*), a slave (*servus*) who is sick, a foundling girl (*puella*) who has been raised in the house of the

senex and his wife and who will turn out to be chaste and freeborn, the woman who abandoned the baby and her husband, the old man's overseer (*vilicus*), and the son's armor-bearer (*armiger*). The prologue signals a recognition comedy when Plautus tells us that the old man and his son are in a struggle over the girl now that she is grown up and that the son has been sent abroad by his father to get him out of the way (60–62). We have every expectation that the son will return and claim his bride. But Plautus has imposed an impediment: the son won't be returning today to the city because Plautus didn't want him to (65), and he took down a bridge that was on the young man's way. Plautus' intervention here suggests that perhaps Diphilus, author of the Greek play that the *Casina* is based on (*Kleroumenoi*, the *Lot-Drawers*), did have the son appear in his play (Moore 1998, p. 167).

The story itself is not unusual. Even before Plautus, Menander featured a husband-wife battle in his *Plokion* (Gell. NA 2.23.9, 12). Plautus' *Asinaria* delivers the standard war over a girl between a husband (Demaenetus) and his wife Artemona (16–26). *Mercator* also has a father and son tussle over a *meretrix* (Pasicompsa), but in that play the son does come home and, more to the point, the battle in *Mercator* is more between the old man (Demipho) and his son (Charinus) than between the old man and his wife. Further, in *Mercator* the prologue tells us what will happen, whereas not until the brief epilogue in *Casina* do we gain the vital information that Casina (who never actually appears) is the daughter of the next-door neighbor (Alcesimus) and that she will marry Euthynicus, the missing son of Lysidamus, who also never appears. Plautus has here withheld key pieces of information and two key players until the final seven lines (1012–1018). But at the same time, he delivers standard themes (the father-son conflict) and conventional morality (the *puella* turns out to be freeborn after all and will somehow remain chaste throughout) to fool us into thinking we'll see another *Mercator* or *Asinaria*.

Thus Plautus gives us in *Casina* hints of a conventional plot and the stock characters seen in so many earlier plays, only to have the women in the play create their own intra-dramatic comedy and to find two main characters who play roles counter to our expectations (Feltovich 2015a, p. 260). Cleostrata and Lysidamus begin as stereotyped characters: she as the *matrona* or *uxor dotata*, the wealthy and shrewish wife not likely to win fans and supporters among most of the audience members; he as the angry old man who is the head of household but who is easily deceived and usually supported in his efforts by many viewers. Cleostrata's entrance song reveals her issuing stern orders to her slaves and refusing her husband's wish to have lunch served (144–164). Lysidamus tries to assert control in his role as *paterfamilias* (or so we hear from the maid Pardalisca, 147). Lysidamus is interested in a young girl and in sex, but these qualities are paralleled in the *senes* in other plays (*Mercator* and *Asinaria*). The battle taking place on stage between husband and wife, though less common than that between father and son, is present in other plays by Plautus (*Mercator*, *Asinaria*, *Menaechmi*).

So far, then, the comedy seems to be playing out in a typically Plautine manner. Or so he wants us to think. But we are then faced with disturbing developments: the deviation from the plot hinted at in the prologue (father-son rivalry over a girl) once we get into the main theme (husband-wife rivalry); the insistence on moral rectitude in the prologue only to have the action turn toward morally questionable behaviors (the overbearing lust of Lysidamus, the cross-dressing of Casina/Chalinus, the homosocial encounters throughout, the mockery

of a marriage); and the takeover of the action by three imposing women who develop into more and more interesting characters as the play progresses. This is clearly not going to be the play we thought it would (cf. Sharrock 2009, p. 38 on “false trails” in the *Casina* prologue).

The Heart of the Matter

Let us then examine how Plautus presents and represents the main characters in *Casina* using these shape shifters to create a play unlike any other in his corpus. Both Lysidamus and Cleostrata are, in their own right, dominant characters, and there is disagreement over which one sets up and controls the action. Lysidamus is certainly an over-determined male, at least at the beginning, who tries to control the plot and whose character sets in motion many interactions with other figures throughout the play (Tatum 1983, p. 87; Slater 1985, p. 93, n. 45). But Cleostrata also commands center stage, and indeed she seizes control of the action along with Pardalisca and Myrrhina when they produce a play-within-the-play (Moore 1998; Franko 2001). Cleostrata enjoys playing with and making fun of all the old men in the play (558–560). We can argue that, while Lysidamus begins as a dominant character and seems to have the upper hand (144–147, 249–251), he soon is bested by Cleostrata and her female allies and gets his comeuppance, devolving in the end into a pale reflection of the *senex amator* he claims as his role in the beginning.

Cleostrata makes an impressive entrance early in the play. After we are introduced to the character of Casina (or the concept of Casina, since she never appears) by the quarreling slaves Olympio and Chalinus, Cleostrata and her maid Pardalisca enter (144–148) with Cleostrata issuing orders to her slaves as she departs to her next-door neighbor Myrrhina’s house. Cleostrata rejects Pardalisca’s suggestion that she arrange for her husband’s lunch to be served. According to the omniscient prologue, Cleostrata seems already to know (58) about Lysidamus’ lust for Casina, and she is out for revenge:

I’m not preparing any and it won’t be cooked today since he’s opposing me and his son for the sake of his pleasure and love, that disgrace of a man! I’ll take revenge on that lover with hunger, with thirst, with harsh words, and with harsh treatment. I’ll torture him thoroughly with uncomfortable words. I’ll make sure he leads the life he deserves, this fodder for the Underworld, seeker of disgrace, heap of infamy. (153–161)

Cleostrata strategically plays the part of the *uxor dotata*, a woman holding power over husband and household, although we are never told explicitly that she has a large dowry (Strong 2016, pp. 32 and 235, n. 73).

When Cleostrata and her neighbor and friend Myrrhina meet in a key scene, Myrrhina asks Cleostrata why she is so upset. Cleostrata blames her husband who treats her badly and does not let her exercise her rights: *Nec mihi ius meum optinendi optio est*, “I have no opportunity to obtain my right” (190; at 371, Lysidamus admits that his wife does have rights over Casina: *tuo pro iure*, “recognizing your right”). Myrrhina, misunderstanding or punning on the word for rights (*ius*), retorts that she is surprised since it is usually men who don’t get their rights (that is, sexual rights) from their wives (191–192). When

Cleostrata explains about Lysidamus and Casina (who is, Cleostrata says, *mea*, “mine”), Myrrhina first warns her not to speak of such things outside in public, then upbraids her for presuming to think she can have property herself that is not her husband’s: “I believe that everything that’s yours is your husband’s” (202). A woman should, Myrrhina says, let her husband do whatever he wants as long as she wants for nothing (204–206); any action against her husband could lead him to divorce her (212). Cleostrata in a fit of pique blames Myrrhina for speaking against her friend (203) and being crazy enough to speak against her own interests (208).

This scene has bothered readers because Myrrhina later in the play becomes one of Cleostrata’s main allies in the battle with Lysidamus over Casina. What accounts for the change or for her tirade against Cleostrata and against strong women in this scene? One possible explanation is that Myrrhina does not in fact change her attitude toward Cleostrata but is consistent in wanting to help her friend, whether through assisting in orchestrating the drama with Chalinus/Casina later, or trying to talk sense into her here (Feltovich 2015a). The play affords a glimpse of social interactions between women, something we see much less frequently than interactions between women and men. It is also very unusual to have collaboration among older or married women; we see it here and in *Cistellaria*. Normally such female collaborations take place between sisters or fellow slaves (Fantham 2015, p. 92; Feltovich 2015b, pp. 128–154). Only in *Casina* do two *matronae* conspire – and conspire successfully – against a philandering husband. (*Mercator* also has two neighboring *matronae*, but there the two wives who are wronged do not conspire to take vengeance, and we do not see Demipho’s wife on stage).

The interaction between Cleostrata and Myrrhina is key to the development of the drama for two reasons. First, it sets up the female cabal early on and in contrast to the immediately preceding scene, where two male slaves battle over their turf in a hostile way, and it gives us a hint of what is to come: the conspiracy of strong and powerful women (three of them by the end) against their weak husbands and masters. Even if Myrrhina does not completely agree with Cleostrata’s rather outrageous position that runs counter to Roman (or Greek) social norms, she has Cleostrata’s welfare at heart and will continue to be her partner. Second, Myrrhina provides another example of what we see throughout the play: characters who change and evolve, who adopt alien identities, who assume roles that often run counter to their gender or character (Dutsch 2008, pp. 16–17). We should not expect a character to remain the same for the duration of the play; every character changes his or her positionality in relation to the other characters with whom they interact.

One marker of women’s interactions is the language they use with each other, as opposed to the language used with other kinds of characters (Adams 1984; Dutsch 2008; James 2015). Women speak differently in public (outside) than they do in private (inside). Thus we see Myrrhina admonishing Cleostrata when Cleostrata brings up her right (*ius*, 190) to the slave girl whom her husband himself lusts after, a right that Cleostrata claims again to Lysidamus (260–262). Myrrhina says, “Please, be quiet,” but Cleostrata responds that she can speak as she wishes here because the two women are alone (193–197). Myrrhina accepts this as true and proceeds to inquire further about the slave girl. The women in this scene use female speech markers that we find between female intimates; these are not used when women speak to men or to those in lower social positions. So

Myrrhina and Cleostrata use words like *amabo* (172–173, “please, sweetie”) and *opsecro* (187–188, 196, “please”). Such words show an emotional reaction, but here are combined with a surprising directness. Myrrhina tells Cleostrata to shut up and accuses her of being stupid (204–205). The polite and deferential language most women would use with men is missing here. Women are, as James suggests, “after a fashion, bilingual” (James 2015, p. 119; Dutsch 2008, pp. 78–81), or, we might say, code-switchers. Lysidamus accuses Cleostrata of not using *blanditia* (coaxing speech) enough when she says that she could not get Alcesimus, the next-door neighbor, to lend his wife’s help; Cleostrata retorts that it is not wives but prostitutes who should be in the business of coaxing other women’s husbands (584–586). Indeed, Lysidamus is forced to take on coaxing discourse himself when he tries to figure out how to gain possession of Casina (228–229). Women adapt themselves to each situation by using different types of speech, as subalterns so often do. The women in *Casina*, especially Cleostrata, use this shift in vocal registry greatly to their advantage.

In addition to women employing language and relationships to solidify their power, they also make use of another form of bilingualism, meter, to control their message. In the scene between Cleostrata and Myrrhina described above (144–216), the two women converse in over 20 different meters, and the song of Pardalisca (621–716) when she describes to Lysidamus the “wedding” is one of the most extensive *cantica* in Plautus (MacCary and Willcock 1976, pp. 117–125, 167–176; Moore 2015, pp. 68–87). The control of meter by female characters in these key scenes and elsewhere serves to reinforce their power over male characters, not only in words but also in the way the surprising and foregrounded rhythms draw attention to the very passages in which women are successfully plotting against men or are clearly one-upping them. Here the three women gain power over the male characters and the plot through enchanting *carmina*. Later, in a surprising counterpart to the effective *carmina* employed by the women, we encounter in the final “arc” of *Casina* a long *canticum* in a range of meters (621–962). There the audience assumes there will be a rapid resolution of the action, but Lysidamus’ humiliation continues far beyond our expectations, with the use of meter and song here again working against the *senex* (see Marshall 2006, p. 210 for the four “arcs” in *Casina*).

Lysidamus enters after Cleostrata and Myrrhina wrap up their conversation (216), the *senex amator* madly in love and making a complete fool of himself (with Cleostrata standing on stage eavesdropping). When he spies Cleostrata, he tries using his own form of bilingualism to sweet-talk and embrace her; she physically pushes him away, becomes angry when she smells his perfume, and calls him a “worthless creature, a gray-haired gnat” (239), hurling the first of many bestializing insults exchanged by husband and wife. This scene (217–278) is the first of many references to Jupiter and Juno used to describe the fraught relationship between Lysidamus and Cleostrata (230ff.; cf. 331ff., 407ff.; *Mercator* uses the same reference points at 690 and 956). Lysidamus means this allusion to Juno as a compliment to Cleostrata, little realizing the resonance of the mythological names: calling himself Jupiter simply reinforces his role as a philanderer (although Lysidamus claims the power and authority in the name), while the name Juno ascribes to Cleostrata beauty and power but also anger (underscored when Lysidamus calls her *tristem*, 230). When later Lysidamus again claims the role of all-powerful Jupiter, his slave Olympio points out that mortal Jupiters die (331–337).

Thus the first interaction between Cleostrata and Lysidamus and the references to Jupiter and Juno help to define the two characters for the remainder of the play: Cleostrata, like Juno, is unafraid to strongly oppose her husband, and she remains an active opponent of him until nearly the end. She is not the shrewish and hectoring kind of wife we see in other plays (who make at least some members of the audience, mainly the men, sympathetic to the husbands; see Artemona in *Asinaria*) but rather strong, clever, and active in her defiance of her philandering husband. Lysidamus (unlike Jupiter) is not strong and powerful but deluded into thinking he can overcome his wife and have the girl he wants. Although he admits that Cleostrata is aware of his plan and seems to have a counter plan, little does he know what his Juno really has in store for him.

During the famous lot-drawing scene, which gave the Greek play by Diphilus its name (*Kleroumenoi*), the two slaves act as surrogates for Cleostrata and Lysidamus, battling with each other in word and deed; their actions parallel what Cleostrata and Lysidamus are doing in word only. Husband and wife direct the martial action from the sidelines, with Lysidamus conceding that Cleostrata has *imperium* (409, “power,” “military command”). Cleostrata is the lot-drawer for her slave Chalinus; unfortunately, they lose. Lysidamus commands (419) Cleostrata to proceed with preparing the wedding, and Cleostrata accedes to his wishes, without ever intending to carry them out.

The action heats up with Pardalisca’s feigned tragic, mad scene (621–719). The women’s tragicomic revenge has begun. Pardalisca here brings to life the always-absent Casina, fashioning her as a threatening and potentially deadly Clytemnestra (657–658) or a mad Cassandra (667, *insanit*) who wields a phallic-substitute sword (in fact, two swords). In an intergeneric move from comedy to tragedy, the stock characters slip again into other roles, with the mock-tragic portrayal of women by another woman (Pardalisca) as evil, threatening, and deadly (cf. Andrews 2004). This forms the opening act of the tragicomedy that these women produce for Lysidamus and Olympio. Nowhere else in Plautine comedy do we find a clever woman, especially a *matrona*, controlling the action and directing her own version of a play (cf. Forehand 1973). In this respect, Cleostrata acts more like another stock Plautine character, the clever and controlling slave, the male *servus callidus*; thus her character, like so many others in *Casina*, is malleable and crosses over lines of status, gender, and position. Pardalisca reveals the cleverness of Cleostrata’s plan in a metatheatrical reference to the Nemean and Olympian games (760–762), which, like the prologue, takes us outside the framework of the play itself to underline its ludic aspect (while still making a serious moral point). Pardalisca describes Olympio’s wedding costume, the adorning and dressing of Chalinus (who becomes Casina), and the charming pretense and dissimulation of the women’s plot (771–772).

Pardalisca lets the audience in on the ambiguous gender of the new bride (*novam nuptam*, 782) when she calls the bride Casinus or “male Casina” (814), a reference that is lost on Lysidamus.² We, the audience, can see that Chalinus/Casina is still behaving in a masculine manner while Lysidamus and Olympio are fooled into thinking that Chalinus *is* Casina; thus the humor is doubled with this obvious disparity in gender play (840–854; Marshall 2006, p. 60). The wedding procession exits the house, the “bride” accompanied by Cleostrata and Myrrhina, and Pardalisca providing musical accompaniment with a mock wedding hymn. Pardalisca wishes that the bride will always be the *victrix* over her husband, be more powerful, have a stronger voice and command (*vox, imperium*), be a

despoiler, and outwit him with trickery (815–823). This bride is given exactly the opposite advice of that in a traditional marriage hymn (MacCary and Willcock 1976, p. 188); this bride will prove to be a woman to be reckoned with and, once again, someone who crosses over the threshold between male and female, bride and bridegroom, an oddly masculine bride who will actually have voice and power. In a striking, playful, and alliterative line, Olympio remarks on the badness of all women: “The bad woman is showing her bad ways to a bad girl” (*mala malae male monstrat*, 826). But Cleostrata steps in to save the woman (or women) from the charge, insisting that the new bride is “an innocent and an inexperienced virgin” (*integrae atque imperitae*, 832).

The most spectacular scene of the play follows, both wildly comic and wildly disturbing. Lysidamus and Olympio battle over who gets the “girl” first, both grabbing and manhandling her “tender little body” (844). But it turns out that this tender young girl, described all in diminutives, fights back, stomping on Olympio’s foot like an elephant (846), hitting him in the chest like a battering ram, and laying him out flat with her elbow. Lysidamus and Olympio trade assessments of her, alternating between wishful diminutives and expressions of dismay at her strength. They are so conflicted and confused about this hybrid creature that even their language cannot cope: Olympio describes her as *valentula*, an improbable combination of strength (*valens*) with a feminine diminutive (852).

While Olympio and Lysidamus go inside the neighbor’s house to celebrate their wedding night, Myrrhina, Pardalisca, and Cleostrata issue forth from Cleostrata’s and Lysidamus’ house, a powerful trio of women who celebrate with great hilarity the drama that they have orchestrated next door. By now Myrrhina, who started out as quite a traditional wife in her behavior and attitudes and as a blocking figure to Cleostrata, has completely changed her tune and is enjoying her new role as co-director and producer of their new play. No playwright ever played a cleverer trick than they have, she claims (860–861); she thus co-opts the accusation of deception usually leveled against women and accepts it as a positive trait and tool in their repertoire. In their imagination, Chalinus has changed gender from the *novam nuptam* (new female bride, 782) to whom Lysidamus refers, to Pardalisca’s *novum nuptum* (new masculine bride, 859), who is with *his* new husband. If this gender-bending and odd coupling bothers Pardalisca and the women, there is no sign of it. The women have orchestrated this clever farce; now all that remains is for them and the audience to watch it (*spectato*, 870).

They do not have long to wait. Olympio bursts out of Alcesimus’ house, battered, afraid, and feeling like the fool he is; he realizes that he and Lysidamus have been made a laughing-stock (877), although he still does not know why, how, or by whom. Pardalisca prevails upon him to tell the whole story of what transpired inside, asking if he found “Casina” sufficiently obedient (*morigera*, 896, a word used almost exclusively of women to refer to the correct behavior expected of a wife; Olympio uses it with a masculine ending at 463 to refer to his own behavior with Lysidamus in a homosexual context). Olympio stumbles through the account of what went on, calling it shameful and a disgrace (903). As he was trying to rape “Casina” before Lysidamus showed up, he encountered something strange and indescribable in “her” *pudenda* – a sword or a radish or a cucumber perhaps (these phallic vegetables are suggested by Pardalisca as she plays into male fantasies about rape). When he tries to kiss her, he is greeted with a bristly beard, and then he is rammed in the chest and knocked off the bed. This is a hybrid creature, both in its anatomy and behavior, that Olympio cannot put into any known category.

Olympio is followed by Lysidamus, who has had the same terrible experience with his “secret wedding” (*clandestinae nuptiae*, 946), and has not only lost his girl but also the markers of his status, his cloak and staff (he is – in a possible metatheatrical reference to the hellenized *fabula palliata* being taken over by Plautus’ Roman women – *expalliat*us, “decloaked,” a Plautine coinage, 945). He has even lost his identity (the text breaks down here with many gaps or lacunae). He claims that he will offer to undergo a slave’s beating when he seeks forgiveness from Cleostrata; here Lysidamus takes on the status and condition of a slave rather than the free man he is, and he decides to take the slave’s last resort, to flee. His way is blocked, however, by Chalinus, still dressed as the bride “Casina,” on one side, and the equally formidable Cleostrata on the other; he is trapped between “wolves and dogs” (971). Cleostrata, playing the ultimate blocking character, feigns ignorance of the whole situation except that she greets him with a telling epithet: “Hi lover!” (*amator*, 969). Her ally Myrrhina chimes in, calling him a “bigamist” (*dismarite*, 974), and Pardalisca (or Myrrhina; the speaker is unclear) claims that he lost his cloak and staff in the act of adultery (*moechissat*, 976). Cleostrata seems taken aback at Lysidamus’ fear (982), and he (conditionally) tenders his apology to ask Cleostrata for forgiveness. He even enrolls Myrrhina to help him out, who intervenes on his behalf. Cleostrata grudgingly agrees to a pardon but for metatheatrical reasons: so the play will not be any longer than it is (1005–1006)! With this break in the dramatic illusion, Cleostrata’s change of heart seems less compelling than it would have been if it had taken place inside the play itself. Cleostrata claims not to be angry, and Lysidamus pronounces her to be the kind of wife he has wanted all along, “kind of charming” (*lepidiorem*, 1008).

The play ends with Chalinus (alias “Casina”) disgruntled, and the epilogue (delivered by Pardalisca or Chalinus) wraps up the story about Casina’s real identity and her future wedding to the son of Cleostrata and Lysidamus, Euthynicus, who was previously mentioned but left unnamed in the prologue. This epilogue stands in lieu of the usual recognition scene that we expect in a Plautine play, but which is not relevant in *Casina*. The real recognition scene in this play is the mock wedding scene, the eventual discovery of the “bride,” and the reconciliation (although strained) of Lysidamus and Cleostrata.

We have seen that Cleostrata is not by any means the stock *matrona* whom we have come to expect in many of Plautus’s plays; further that Cleostrata, along with her female allies, controls much of the action in this play and is the producer and director of the play-within-a-play. We have also come to realize that all the characters in this remarkable comedy are ever-changing, with their identities largely dependent upon their interactions with and relationships to other characters. This is evidenced by Myrrhina, who evolves from the stock wife to a willing ally in the plot against Lysidamus; by Casina/Chalinus, who is the hardest character to pin down; by Pardalisca, who shape-shifts into Casina and speaks in Casina’s voice (Andrews 2004, pp. 455–456); and by Cleostrata, whom we expect to be the usual *matrona* in the play but who takes off in an entirely new direction, eventually turning her husband into a slave (cf. *Asin.* 871–875, where Artemona complains about her husband not delivering the labor he owes to her).

But what about Lysidamus? Some critics and readers see him as the controlling character in the play, the person whose relationships with others define him (Tatum 1983, pp. 87, 89; Slater 1985, p. 93, n. 45). If Lysidamus plays the role of Jupiter throughout and Cleostrata plays Juno, even though Juno sometimes has the upper hand, Jupiter always

wins. But since Plautus alters other paradigms and expectations, we cannot rely on this mythologem to settle the issue about who is in control.

Early in the play, Lysidamus seems to control the action. He appears to be the usual *senex* and *paterfamilias*; a philanderer (like Demipho in *Mercator*), but still in charge of his own situation. He barks orders at his slave Olympio (295–296, 490–493), and he reprimands his wife Cleostrata when she seems to go too far, telling her she is making too much noise (249–253). He seems to be the character who drives the action of the play and to whom the other characters react. Tatum argues that “the spectacular comic scenes of the play are spectacular responses to Lysidamus” (the lot-drawing, Pardalisca’s mad scene, the mock wedding, Olympio’s messenger speech; 1983, pp. 87, 89). Yet Lysidamus also acts against his role of the normal *senex*, crossing over boundaries to become a sex-crazed *senex amator*, later becoming a slave to both his own slave (738–748) and his wife (937–962) and a character chasing men and women alike (cf. *Asin.* 700–712).

If the main characters in *Casina* played true to type, we would expect the following: Cleostrata, if indeed she is an *uxor dotata*, would be shrewish, getting away with making her husband miserable because of her large dowry and losing the sympathy of parts of the audience because of her behavior. Lysidamus, the *senex amator*, might play the somewhat foolish old man who chases a young girl, perhaps one meant for his son, and he might make himself look foolish by acting against his age and status; he finally, though, would admit the error of his ways and be reconciled with his wife. This plot structure is what we would expect from stock characters in a typical Plautine comedy. But this is not what happens in *Casina* with Lysidamus and Cleostrata or with the story arc. The plot quickly veers away from the *adulescens* and the *puella* plot: a possible rivalry between father and son is hinted at in the prologue but then moves to a rivalry between husband and wife, with these two becoming the leading characters (Forehand 1973; Cody 1976). Once we center on husband and wife, the husband quickly cedes his power, status, and moral authority to his wife. Lysidamus’ character is impugned in many ways. His behavior stands in contrast to that of another Plautine foolish old man, Demipho in *Mercator*, who recognizes that taking a mistress, one who is rightly his son’s, is a mistake (983: “I admit it; I have made a mistake”) and who genuinely asks an intermediary to make things right between himself and his son and to gain him forgiveness (991–996). Demipho says that he has given up his errant ways (1000). Lysidamus eventually also has to concede to his wife in the end, but he is never sincere in his apologies to and flatteries of Cleostrata (1008), he blames his actions on everyone else (even Bacchantes in 979–981), and he primarily wants to get out of the trouble he has managed to create. He never reforms, and Cleostrata wins only a small victory, an insincere pledge from Lysidamus that he will change, at least for this one day (Forehand 1973, pp. 250–251; Fantham 2015).

Lysidamus has two other strikes against him. He is not only overcome with an unseemly and animalistic passion for Casina, but his passion extends to boys as well. Unusually for Plautus, several scenes in *Casina* explicitly feature Lysidamus’s lust for Olympio (Lilja 1983; Richlin 2015, 2018). In their first encounter of this sort, Olympio, little realizing what is in store for him, calls himself “submissive” (*opsequens*, 449) and claims to Lysidamus that he has been very accommodating because he has given Casina to Lysidamus. Lysidamus, overly excited at the thought of procuring sex with Casina, solicits Olympio instead, calling him “my darling” (*voluptas mea*, 453), a phrase that is elsewhere a marker

of female speech (Dutsch 2008; James 2015). Chalinus, who is eavesdropping, is horrified and makes a vulgar comment about homosexual intercourse (455). It seems that Lysidamus had also solicited Chalinus earlier (460–462). Lysidamus uses the same language here to Olympio that he uses elsewhere of Casina, showing an indiscriminate lust for all potential lovers regardless of their sex.

In a later, fast-paced scene, larded with food innuendo (720–759), Plautus plays on the interrelationship between sexuality, gender, and social status. Olympio and Lysidamus switch positions, with Lysidamus becoming Olympio’s slave, addressing him as “my darling little Olympio” (*Olympisce mi*, 739; Paratore’s Italian translation neatly renders it “Olimpionuccio mio”). One more short scene prepares us for the burlesque wedding finale with the ambiguously gendered bride. Olympio compares Lysidamus to an “untamable stallion” (811) in his tenacious hankering after sex, whereupon Lysidamus takes him up on his supposed sexual reference and tenders an invitation (812). Olympio finds the invitation appalling, but he realizes with an imprecation that, if Lysidamus persists, he has little choice. Olympio’s account of the wedding scene wraps these previous homosocial references into the dramatic scene of the wedding, where Olympio tries to figure out the anatomy of Casina/Chalinus. This scene brings to the fore motifs not usually seen in Plautus’ other plays: overt homoeroticism, same sex desire coupled with heterosexuality, and transvestism (cf. *Asin.* 700–712). The sexual innuendo also turns Lysidamus into a thoroughly degraded character who is completely ruled by his passions and totally unrepentant.

The second way in which Plautus underscores the unsavory nature and behavior of Lysidamus is with his use of animal imagery. Lysidamus has an unmistakable odor, a stench that he only partly covers up with his liberal use of perfume (226–227, 236–240, 727). Lysidamus is several times compared to an insect or wild animal: a gray-haired gnat (239; MacCary and Willcock on “the notorious lechery of flies” 1976, p. 129), a wild boar (476), a castrated ram (535), a toothless goat (550), and an untamable stallion (811) – all animals symbolizing lechery but impotency (cf. 967–968, where Lysidamus fears that his loins will be smashed and he’ll face a “loinwreck,” *lumbifragium*). We should note too that the epilogue ends by threatening the spectators: if they do not applaud, they will get a “he-goat perfumed with bilgewater” (1018), a final reminder of what Lysidamus has been reduced to.

Afterword: The Play’s the Thing

Clearly then, although Cleostrata and Lysidamus begin the play as the ostensibly stock characters we are so familiar with in Plautine comedy, it does not take long before they transition into their opposites, with Cleostrata gaining the upper hand in the play and Lysidamus losing ground, driven by his lechery, passions, and ineptitude. As with so many characters in *Casina*, these two main players have unstable identities, doubling up with other characters and taking on different affects depending upon their interlocutors. If we are waiting for Plautus to sort things out at the end, as so often happens in comedy, we wait in vain. In the end, the conflict between husband and wife that drives the play is not resolved; all we get is a weak, grudging, and insincere apology from Lysidamus to

Cleostrata and an observation by Cleostrata that she needs to end the play so it won't be any longer (1005–1006).

Plautus also contrives an even more interesting plot by including Cleostrata's play-within-a-play. With Cleostrata in charge, we see in this mini-drama women on the ascendant and men humiliated. We are also introduced to some serious issues in Cleostrata's play: the attempted rape of a young virgin by arguably the father or stepfather, the attempt by a father to cheat his son of a bride, the adulterous behavior of a husband, the attempted coercion of a slave into raping a young virgin, and the abuse of slaves. It can be argued that *Casina*, of all of Plautus's plays, raises these issues in a disturbing way, forcing us to view them in the play-within-the-play but never resolving them (Moore 1998, pp. 165–166). Plautus, by exploring these issues largely within the inner play, can raise them without having to resolve them in the play as a whole. His use of shifting gender, sexuality, and social status further adds to the complexity and lack of resolution in *Casina*, making it perhaps the most radical and least-resolved play in the Plautine corpus.

NOTES

- 1 *Casina* is generally dated by a reference in line 980 to the Bacchae, which may refer to the *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* of 186 BCE; thus the play would have been written and produced within a year of Plautus's death or perhaps even posthumously (cf. Duckworth 1952, pp. 54–55, 66; MacCary and Willcock 1976, p. 207; O'Bryhim 1989, p. 91). I would like to thank the editors for their very helpful comments.
- 2 It is unclear who speaks line 814, but it is likely Pardalisca, who has already explained to the audience the deception (MacCary and Willcock 1976, p. 187). O'Bryhim ascribes the line to Chalinus; he also argues that Lysidamus is actually Casinus and that the name is drawn from Atellan farce (1989, p. 95–96).

FURTHER READING

Christenson's new companion to *Casina* (Christenson 2019; too late for inclusion in this chapter) covers themes, performance, social background, and reception. Connors (1997) and Franko (1999) are still very useful articles on *Casina*.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

Archetypal Character Studies: Masculinity and Power

Anne Feltovich

Aulularia

Euclio – miser, old citizen man

Phaedrium – his daughter

Lyconides – young citizen man, loves Phaedrium

Miles Gloriosus

Pyrgopolynices – braggart soldier, free foreigner

Philocomasium – concubine abducted by Pyrgopolynices

Pleusicles – young citizen man, loves Philocomasium

Palaestrio – slave to Pyrgopolynices, loyal to former master Pleusicles

Pseudolus

Ballio – pimp, free foreigner

Simo – old citizen man

Pseudolus – slave to Simo

Archetypes of Excess

According to Duckworth (1994, p. 270), Plautus shows his unique genius in *Aulularia*, *Pseudolus*, and *Miles Gloriosus* through his archetypal characters: “His outstanding characters (Euclio, Ballio, Pyrgopolynices) are imaginative and fantastic creations ... there is nothing comparable to such characters in the extant plays of New Comedy.” Each is marked by excess – stinginess, greed, braggadocio – and each is particularly outstanding in his lack of self-awareness, making him an easy target of jokes. They provide an excellent opportunity to study masculinity as a function of class, as each feels his masculinity is

threatened on account of his own class standing, and each is upended by individuals of lower classes (women, slaves, and prostitutes).

These men hold distinctly masculine power in a society that is nominally Greek (the plays are adapted from Greek originals) but metaphorically Roman: Euclio is a *senex* – a citizen male and patriarch, the position of greatest prestige; Ballio is a successful pimp, having power not only over his sex-slaves, but also over the men who desire them; and Pyrgopolynices, a mercenary soldier, derives status from his profession and his physical strength (although he overestimates both). But these men do not possess unequivocal social dominance: Euclio is an Athenian citizen but poor; Pyrgopolynices is free but not Athenian; Ballio is free but hated by the men who want his prostitutes. Their insecurity leads them to abuse individuals of lower status, who get revenge by bringing about their tormentors' downfall.

Our three characters become the Plautine archetypes for the miser, boastful soldier, and greedy pimp, but all three have antecedents in Greek comedy. The miser Euclio has much in common with the misanthrope of Menander's *Dyskolos* (Questa 2004, pp. 1–13); the boastful soldier, Pyrgopolynices, is traced to Lamachus of Aristophanes's *Acharnians* (Mastromarco 2009); and the pimp Ballio combines traits of the Greek *pornoboskos* with a stock type from Atellan farce (Marshall 2006, pp. 140–144). Let us first consider Euclio, whose miserly ways are the focus of *Aulularia*. We find strong antecedents in Menander, who shows broad interest in evaluating excessive behavior and the resulting social harm. In fact, several of Menander's plays take their titles from a character flaw that, presumably, the title character must overcome for the resolution of the play: *Apistos* ("The Unbeliever"), *Deisidaimon* ("The Superstitious Man"), *Methe* ("Drunkenness"), *Misogyne* ("The Misogynist"), and *Orge* ("Anger"). To our great fortune, *Dyskolos* ("The Misanthrope"), which bears some similarity to Plautus's *Aulularia*, survives almost completely, allowing us to observe the transformation of the title character. In this play, a grouchy old man withdraws from society until a near-death experience convinces him that everyone needs community (*Dys.* 710–729). Before the play was recovered, and when we knew only of its title, scholars hypothesized that it was the model for Plautus's *Aulularia* (Arnott 1988, pp. 182–183). The discovery of a nearly complete manuscript of *Dyskolos* in 1958 made clear that it was not the model, but similarities between the two plays are nonetheless striking. In both, an old man's distrust of others is presented as excessive and the cause of his social isolation. In both, a young citizen man would like to marry the old man's daughter. In both, a mishap helps the cranky old man see that social isolation is harmful to oneself, one's family, and society (Konstan 1983, pp. 33–46). Plautus's Euclio is marked by comic excess beyond that of Menander's Knemon, which will be explored in this chapter.

Plautus's braggart soldier, Pyrgopolynices, owes much to Aristophanes's caricature of Lamachus, a historical figure and war-monger, in the *Acharnians*. The audience delights when the protagonist, Dikaiopolis, a poor farmer whose name means "just citizen," mocks the arrogant general, whose insatiable desire for conflict is out of touch with the feelings of the weary populace (Mastromarco 2009, pp. 27–29). Of the many soldiers in Menander, not all are braggarts, but fragments of his *Kolax*, combined with what we know from Terence's *Eunuch* (based on Menander), show that the "braggart soldier" type existed in Menander's repertoire (Mastromarco 2009, p. 21). In addition to braggadocio,

Mastromarco (2009, p. 32) identifies one other characteristic of the stock type – womanizing – which he argues was added in the era of Greek New Comedy. Pyrgopolynices in *Miles Gloriosus* is quintessentially arrogant, unsympathetic to common folk, and has a weakness for women. This chapter will show that his character is defined by hyperbole, and that much of that hyperbole is related to masculinity: strength/weakness, military prowess, and sexual exploits.

Our final character for consideration is the pimp Ballio in *Pseudolus*. Because Greek Middle and New Comedy is poorly preserved, little evidence survives of the Greek Comedy stock type known as the *pornoboskos* (“brothel-keeper”), the antecedent to the Roman *leno* (“pimp”). A fragment from Menander’s *Kolax* preserves 13 lines spoken by a brothel-keeper, in which he demonstrates an obsession with money that is characteristic of later Plautine pimps. “Pornoboskos” is in the title of at least three lost plays, by Eubulus and Anaxilas (Middle Comedy) and Posidippus (New Comedy). But despite evidence for Greek antecedents, Marshall (2006, p. 140 n. 61) claims of Plautus, “The problems posed by pimps... are presented in purely Roman terms: we can be certain if a *pornoboskos* existed in the Greek original, it was nothing like the *leno* Plautus presents.” Based on physical descriptions of pimps in three Plautine plays (*Pseudolus*, *Rudens*, and *Curculio*), Marshall (2006, pp. 140–144) demonstrates that Plautus’s pimps combine features of the Greek *pornoboskos* (for which the mask is described in Pollux’s *Onomasticon* IV, 143–54) and characters from Atellan farce, with Ballio being most closely related to Pappus. All of these antecedents lead up to Ballio, who Marshall calls “the paragon of pimps” because, unlike Plautus’s other pimps, Ballio’s greed is untempered by sentimentality, and he even takes pride in his negative reputation. His unparalleled avarice and cruelty will be examined in my analysis below.

The audience is not meant to sympathize with Ballio, Euclio, or Pyrgopolynices. Instead, we are meant to laugh at them. In fact, we cheer for their downfall. But while Knemon of Menander’s *Dyskolos* and the braggart soldier in Aristophanes’s *Acharnians* were exposed by upstanding, sympathetic citizen men (the character in *Acharnians* is even named “Just Citizen”), Plautus’s characters are exposed by socially disadvantaged characters like slaves, women, and prostitutes. The audience delights when the high and mighty are brought down by the low and powerless. This element was present in Greek comedy – the enslaved cooks in *Dyskolos* roast Knemon when given the chance – but Plautus makes the subaltern characters the primary vehicle for powerful men’s demise. These characters often accomplish their revenge through trickery, one of few tools available to those of a relatively disadvantaged social position. Stewart (2008, p. 69) notes that trickster tales, in which a weaker defeats a stronger, are particularly common in slave societies, “where they have provided role models ... for subordinated groups on how to survive enslavement and its concomitant dehumanization.” The prevalence of subaltern tricksters in Plautus reflects the changing demographics in Rome in the late third and early second centuries BCE, at which time Rome saw a large influx of slaves from military expansion (cf. Stewart 2008, pp. 79–80; Richlin 2005, pp. 21–30).

Plautus wastes no time exposing the character flaws of Euclio, Ballio, and Pyrgopolynices. In our first play, *Aulularia*, the household god and speaker of the prologue says that Euclio is greedy (*avido ingenio*, 9) and does not worship the household gods diligently. But Euclio has a pious daughter, Phanium, who needs a dowry,

for which reason the god revealed a once-buried pot of gold to her father. When Euclio enters the stage, he confirms, by his actions and words, the picture painted of him in the prologue: the newfound gold has made him paranoid, which he deals with (or does not deal with) by beating his slave woman, Staphyla. He is convinced that she is out to steal the money, even though there is no indication that she knows it exists (40–65). If there were any doubt as to who is in the wrong, Staphyla addresses the audience after Euclio has left the stage – a dramatic convention to signal that she is telling the truth – explaining that his behavior has been erratic and excessively cruel, throwing her out of the house “ten times in a single day” without cause (70). Staphyla reveals that Euclio’s shortcomings do not stop with his miserly ways: his daughter is pregnant – surely an indication that he has not kept proper watch on her. Furthermore, Euclio knows nothing about it, which sets up Staphyla, not Euclio, as the moral protector of the raped girl. As with the grouch of Menander’s *Dyskolos*, the audience desires to see him humbled and appreciates when he is reformed by the end of the play.

In *Miles*, Pyrgopolynices communicates his stock type, the boastful soldier, when he strides onto the stage speaking in superlatives about his shield (*Mil.* 1–9). His parasite, Artotrogus, feeds his delusion with effusive compliments (10–14). Artotrogus confirms the audience’s hypotheses about both stock types (braggart and parasite) when he tells the audience that Pyrgopolynices is lying, but Artotrogus enables him in exchange for food (20). Like Euclio, Pyrgopolynices is guilty of a number of sins: he is haughty, without shame, smells like dung, and is prone to oath-breaking and adultery (*gloriosus, impudens, stercoreus, plenus periuri atque adulteri*, 89–90). The free prostitute, Acroteleutium, says he is boastful (*magnidicum*), curly-haired (*cincinnatum*; that is, Eastern), and a perfumed adulterer (*moechum unguentum*, 923–924). The last two connect Pyrgopolynices’s inferior character with his eastern origin, and he boasts of his ties to king Seleucis, whom he serves as mercenary (948–950). Such insults tap into the racist, anti-eastern sentiments of Greek and Roman audiences, who associated the East with luxury, softness, and unmanliness (cf. Chapter 20, pp. 310–314). Pyrgopolynices is not a character whom the audience wants to succeed.

In *Pseudolus*, Ballio is painted as similarly excessive, not just in his personality, like Pyrgopolynices, but also in his abuse of his slaves, like Euclio. Ballio’s entrance in *Pseudolus* is an exaggerated version of Euclio’s entrance in *Aulularia*: he flogs a small company of slaves, making threats contingent upon impossible demands, which Slater describes as “sadistic” (1985, p. 122). Ballio tells his prostitutes – who currently enjoy the *relative* benefit of being raped only by a handful of rich men (*viris summis*) who can pay well – that they must earn the cost of their upkeep for an entire year in one day, or he will prostitute them to the general public (178). The threat implies more rapes because poorer customers means more customers. McLeish (1976, p. 44) says:

The real villains of Plautus’s comedies are the pimps. We laugh at the old fools and the boastful soldiers, but their only *fault* is foolishness, and they are usually rewarded as they deserve (by losing the girl).... no one in Plautus has a good word to say for pimps.

The audience has no sympathy for Ballio and eagerly awaits his downfall.

Self-Control and Manliness

Excessive abuse of slaves signals poor moral character to the Roman audience, thus heightening the anticipation of the abusers' demise. Joshel (2011, p. 224) argues that:

Writers and poets create punished slaves to characterise their masters and mistresses. Floggings for failures of service or for no reason at all delineate and criticise slaveholders' cruelty, ill-temper, or lack of self-control.

While Romans had the legal right and social license to abuse their slaves, excessive and unnecessary abuse was viewed as poor household management (Harris 2001, p. 334). A "good" master inspires the loyalty of his slaves through his own strong moral character (Parker 1998, p. 157); a powerful, respectable man will earn the loyalty of his slaves through personality, reducing violence to an occasional tool rather than a constant necessity. A master cannot realistically control a slave's every action, so the goal is to engender such loyalty that the slave looks out for the master's interests of his own volition. In McCarthy's words (2000, p. 24):

Successful mastery would confer on the master a mark of unquestionable prestige, the mark of someone who was constantly up to the difficult task of making others conform to his or her will.

Social dominants can control subordinates either through naked force, or by controlling ideology, but the former has serious consequences:

If deemed "excessive," the use of force will only delegitimize the dominant group's right to rule in the eyes of subordinates and dominants alike. *The more illegitimate the dominants' power is seen to be, the more violence dominants will be required to use*, leading to even greater delegitimation and thus into an ever spiraling downward cycle. (Sidanius and Pratto 1999, p. 103; emphasis mine)

The excessive use of force by Ballio and Euclio raises questions about the legitimacy of their power, and the legitimacy of the slave system in general. Slave owners have a vested interest in the ability of other slave owners to maintain control with minimal use of force: as Joshel (2011, p. 218) says, "The least useful of all slaves is a dead one." Slaves obey a "good" master without coercion because they recognize his right to rule. Stewart, drawing on evidence from Cato and Plautus, explains how the ideal Roman master "seasoned" his slaves to accept their condition and cooperate without constant application of the whip (2012, and Chapter 24 in this volume). Likewise, Joshel (2011, p. 224) uses evidence from Varro, Cato, and Columella to show that the ideal master controlled his slaves more through psychological manipulation than brute force.

In *Aulularia*, Plautus offers an example of a "good" master; that is, one whose slaves recognize his right to rule because of his upright moral character. In this play, the young citizen Lyconides wants to marry Phanium, daughter of the miser Euclio, whose household god deems Lyconides to be a morally worthy suitor for the pious Phanium.

Plautus (or his Greek antecedent) gives Lyconides a loyal slave, who defines slave loyalty for the audience:

This is the act of a worthy slave (*servi frugi*), to do what I am eager to do,
to not regard his master's command as a hindrance and a bother.
For a slave who seeks to serve his master according to his wish
should administer to his master's affairs quickly (*matura*), and his own later (*sera*).
(587–590)

The slave then provides examples of loyalty, focusing on his own situation: a loyal slave provides practical assistance to a lovesick master. And the slave does these things willingly, because the slave's wishes should be in accordance with those of his master (cf. the slave monologue on loyalty in *Menaechmi*, 966–985). The audience may interpret the slave's statements as genuine or ironic, and if irony is intended, the actor can signal with intonation and body language. Regardless of tone, loyalty is defined by the interests of the slave-holding class, and the perfect overlap between the master's desires and the slave's desires is a fiction created by slave holders to justify the exploitation of slave labor.

The slaves of Euclio and Ballio stand in stark contrast to Lyconides's loyal slave: opening scenes show that Euclio and Ballio are weak, unable to foster their slaves' fidelity through any means other than punishment. In *Miles*, there is no comparable scene indicating that Pyrgopolynices controls his slaves through violence alone, but Palaestrio tells the audience that he has not been Pyrgopolynices's slave for long (only three years, 95), signaling that Palaestrio will not be loyal to the soldier, because the soldier has not earned it yet. Instead, Palaestrio will be loyal to his previous master, the young man in love with Pyrgopolynices's concubine (Philocomasium). Slave loyalty is a tricky business: for a slave-holding society to feel comfortable with the inherent threat presented by owning human property, it must convince itself that slaves are devoted to their masters, and that those bonds are difficult to transfer to a new master. In fact, Palaestrio refers to his former master as "the best" (*optimus*, 99); this line is spoken in a monologue, a conventional signal that Palaestrio speaks from the heart.

The qualities of a "good" master are connected to the qualities of manliness. Control over one's household and everything in it is the defining characteristic of the patriarch, as the Roman *paterfamilias* had the power of life and death over his children and slaves. Roman men "relate to the demonstration of autonomy through the exercise of power over others" (Alston 1998, p. 207). The ideal master, with broad control over his subjects, is taken to its extreme in literary *exempla* where slaves commit suicide or threaten to commit suicide upon the master's death, a fantasy that transfers the master's dependency upon the slave to the slave's dependency upon the master (Parker 1998, p. 161). Similarly, Plautus demonstrates slave attachment when a slave obstructs his master's suicide (Dutsch 2012, pp. 191–192). Palaestrio plays into the fantasy of slave dependency when he makes Pyrgopolynices believe that he, Palaestrio, is reliant upon him: when Pyrgopolynices says he is gifting Palaestrio to another, the slave says, *quo modo ego vivam sine te?* ("How will I live without you?" 1207). Here Palaestrio acknowledges the literary *topos* of slave dependency ironically: he feels no loyalty toward his master but knows what his master wants to hear.

Euclio, Ballio, and Pyrgopolynices's shortcomings as masters are also shortcomings as men, but Pyrgopolynices presents the clearest example of what we would call fragile masculinity. It is at the heart of his stock type, the braggart soldier, a stock type which is not complete without the flatterer/parasite Artotrogus to feed his delusions and simultaneously expose them to the audience. McDonnell (2006, p. 31) argues that in Plautus, the word *virtus* most strongly correlates to military courage, and this link is abundantly clear in *Miles*. The play opens with Pyrgopolynices consoling his sword – an implement of war and manliness – for having to endure such a long period without killing anyone (5–8). He asks for the whereabouts of Artotrogus, who answers, with his first words onstage, that he is “standing next to a man, brave and successful and possessing kingly good-looks” (*stat propter virum | fortem atque fortunatum et forma regia*, 9–10). When Pyrgopolynices wonders if he is manly enough, Artotrogus cuts right to the chase, defining the soldier first and foremost as a *vir*, and a brave, successful, good-looking one at that (on the link between *forma* and *virtus*, see McDonnell 2006, pp. 34–35).

In his efforts to flatter Pyrgopolynices, Artotrogus shapes a definition of masculinity based on physical and sexual prowess: he “reminds” the soldier of the time the soldier broke an elephant’s arm (27) and the time he could have killed five hundred men with a single stroke (52–53). Artotrogus also claims “all women love you, and not without just reason” (*amant ted omnes mulieres neque iniuria*, 58). Pyrgopolynices’s manliness is not only contingent upon his physical superiority, but upon the recognition of that superiority by others. The parasite tells an apocryphal story of being stopped by fawning mobs who presumed that the parasite was accompanying Achilles himself (61). The hypothetical fans expressed envy toward the “lucky” (*fortunatae*, 65) women who have sex with Pyrgopolynices.

But the flattery is necessary precisely because Pyrgopolynices lacks the qualities of manliness. The inability to control one’s sexual desires is distinctly unmanly, and is a common flaw in free males (usually citizens) of Roman comedy (Ormand 2009, p. 147). The soldier’s lack of self-control is evident when the slave, Palaestrio, must rein in his master after Pyrgopolynices’s beloved threatens suicide (in a tone that the audience will recognize as mock-tragic). Pyrgopolynices asks whether he should go to her, and Palaestrio answers that pursuing her would be a sign of weakness:

For you will cheapen yourself if you give yourself too freely (*te ultro largiere*);
allow her to come to you freely; let her seek, let her long, let her wait for you.
Do you want to lose that reputation which you have? Don’t do it. (1243–1245)

The exchange is noteworthy on two levels: not only does the audience expect the free man to excel in self-mastery, but they also believe the slave to be inherently incapable of it, one of many beliefs that slave-holders use to justify the institution (cf. Sidanius and Pratto 1999, p. 47 on legitimizing myths). But here, the slave coaches the master on how to be a man by exercising self-control.

The ideal man has mastery not only over himself, but also over other men and over women, for this is what separates the free man from both woman and slave. Examples of this are drawn from all three plays. In *Aulularia*, Euclio, who is controlled by his own money, fears being controlled by a woman with money. He assiduously agrees when his neighbor, Megadorus,

delivers a long monologue on the dangers of a dowered wife, because she is not in the power of her husband (534–535). In *Pseudolus*, there is a passing reference to Ballio's sexual domination of his male slaves: an enslaved boy laments that if he does not procure a present for Ballio, he will be made to drink the "fuller's produce" (*fructus fullonius*, 782), a reference to oral rape as the fuller's produce is urine, used in the cleaning process. Neither Ballio nor Euclio is able to achieve self-mastery, but both are eager to exert their dominance over women and slaves. While self-mastery can be expected of the citizen Euclio, it is assumed that a pimp like Ballio will have none, being associated with greed and lust on account of his profession.

Our most complex example of mastery comes from *Miles*, in which the prostitute Acroteleutium plays into Pyrgopolynices's desire to dominate by putting on a show of dependence. In order to lure the soldier away from Philocomasium (the girl beloved by the young citizen man Pleusicles), the beautiful young Acroteleutium pretends to be married to the old man next door, but claims she wants to leave him for the handsome young soldier. To entice Pyrgopolynices into committing adultery (he thinks), Acroteleutium and her slave woman, Milphidippa, stage a conversation for the soldier to overhear. They say he can only be approached "by letter or messenger, as if a king" (1225), and many women want him (1231), but he is picky (*fastidiosus*, 1233). They make the soldier believe that he, and he alone, has the power to pursue and pick a mate. When Acroteleutium expresses fear that he will reject her because of her looks (1233–1235), she communicates that she is dependent upon him for her own sense of self-worth (a power-trip for him if there ever was one). He notices her (feigned) lack of self-confidence ("How she despises herself!" 1236), gleeful to realize that she *needs* him; that he has the power to affirm her value. Finally, she tells her slave woman that if the soldier does not marry her, she will commit suicide. Pyrgopolynices believes that other people are like him, needing affirmation from without; Acroteleutium understands and exploits this. She gives him a role to play, as her protector, and he is eager to assume this role, saying to his slave, "I see that I must prevent the death of this woman! Should I go to her?" (1242). She knows exactly how to play him, controlling him by making him believe he is controlling her.

In Which the Haughty Are Exposed by Their Subordinates

Our three central characters live in fear of being subordinate, fear that they combat by exerting control over those in subordinate positions. But their pretense of control is just that: a pretense. In *Miles*, women and slaves are laughing at Pyrgopolynices, lying to him, and only pretending that he is as important as he thinks he is. Two slaves and a prostitute work to deceive him, while he is ignorant of the play-within-a-play (on metatheater, see Chapter 16 in this volume; Moore 1998, pp. 72–77; Maurice 2007, pp. 407–409). Milphidippa understands that her part is to flatter the soldier (1042) and make him believe that he has the power to accept or reject Acroteleutium. But after staging the conversation for the soldier, she turns to Palaestrio and asks, "What about it? How am I doing with my role?" (*quid est? ut ludo?* 1073). And he responds, "By Hercules, I can't even contain my laughter!" (1073). With these words, the slaves acknowledge overtly that they are deceiving the soldier, letting him believe he is running the show.

Euclio and Ballio are likewise unable to hide their weaknesses from social subordinates. In *Aulularia*, a slave and two hired cooks roast the miser Euclio for his miserly ways (290–321). Their portrait of him is preposterous (he sleeps with a bag over his gullet so as not to lose any of his spirit while he sleeps, 302–303) and vulgar: a cook asks if he also sleeps with a bag over his lower gullet, so as to not lose any of *that* spirit while he sleeps (304–305). Most of the jokes target his comically absurd thriftiness: he cries about wasted water when he bathes (308) and takes his nail clippings home after visiting the barber (311–313). A cook serves similar comic purposes in *Pseudolus*: he pretends to flatter Ballio while actually threatening him, using a mythological reference that Ballio misses but the audience will catch: he says that he will cook up a broth to turn Ballio into a young man again, like Medea did for Pelias (868–872; cf. Chapter 5, [pp. 14–15]). The only catch is, after chopping up Pelias, Medea purposefully omitted the proper incantations, resulting in a rather permanent state for his death. Wright (1975, p. 404) suggests that this scene serves no purpose other than comic relief, and stylistically it seems to be a Plautine addition. As people of low status, cooks and slaves must tread lightly when interacting with a free man, even an unlikeable one, but they are free to ridicule him behind his back, or to his face with enough subtlety – to the delight of the audience. Euclio, Pyrgopolynices, and Ballio try so hard to keep up the pretense of control – and masculinity – but the people of lower social status see through the charade.

Why does Plautus make individuals of lower status responsible for exposing the shortcomings of these men? Women and slaves, operating on the margins, must understand both their own social world and the social world of the dominant class. bell hooks (1984, p. vii) explains how people on the margins become conversant in both cultures, and why dual fluency is necessary:

Living as we did – on the edge – we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as on the margin. We understood both.

Their perspectives as outsiders with intimate access to the insider world gives them a more neutral framework from which to evaluate the dominant social values (cf. Collins 1986). In this respect, women and slaves are comparable to Simmel's stranger, defined as a person who combines nearness and farness: "Because he is not rooted in the peculiar attitudes and biased tendencies of the group, he stands apart from all these with the peculiar attitude of the 'objective'" (1921, p. 324). Our slave characters are both near (living among slave owners) and far (excluded from the privileges of the slave-owning patriarchy). From this position, they can see the social laws that govern the dominant class more clearly. This, perhaps, helps answer Stewart's question (2012, pp. 15–16) on why Plautus developed the slave character, rather than the poor free man, into the trickster figure who bests his social superiors.

In our three plays, slaves play an integral role in exposing the pretense of the three slave-owning men, then orchestrating their humiliation, or relative loss of power. Euclio's demise begins when Lyconides's slave overhears Euclio talking about his pot of gold (*Aul.* 608–615), which is buried in the shrine of *Fides*. Soon after, Euclio catches

the slave in the shrine, suspects the worst (rightfully so: the slave was attempting to steal it, as indicated at 620), and begins physically and verbally abusing the slave, threatening beatings and hangings (628–646). As a result of his humiliating encounter with Euclio, the slave vows to get revenge by stealing the gold (661–666). Euclio unwittingly facilitates the slave's plot: the slave guesses, correctly, that the paranoid Euclio will seek a new hiding place for the gold. The slave watches, waits, and follows Euclio and the gold to its new resting spot.

Like Euclio, Pyrgopolynices is brought down by the plot of a clever slave, Palaestrio, who is responsible for masterminding two tricks against the arrogant soldier. First, Palaestrio claims that the soldier's beloved has an identical twin (*Mil.* 238–242), so that Palaestrio's former master, Pleusicles, can embrace the "twin" without arousing the soldier's suspicion. Palaestrio devises the second trick – catching the soldier in a supposedly adulterous affair with the prostitute hired to pose as Periplectomenus's wife – with two stated purposes: "so that the long-haired soldier be fleeced thoroughly," (*qui ammutiletur miles usque caesariatus*, 768), and so that Pleusicles can take the girl home (769–770). As noted above, two women (the free prostitute, Acroteleutium, and her slave woman, Milphidippa) play key roles in humiliating the soldier. Acroteleutium says that she is delighted to make fun (*ludificari*, 906) of the soldier, whom she describes as *populum odium* and *magnidicum* ("hated by the people" and "boastful," 923). Just as Lyconides targeted Euclio because of Euclio's offensive behavior (in that case, verbally abusing Lyconides), Acroteleutium targets Pyrgopolynices because of his offensive behavior, although she responds to broad character flaws, rather than a specific incident.

The quintessential clever slave is Pseudolus, who swindles the pimp Ballio out of both money and his prostitute. In his pursuits, Pseudolus enlists the help of another slave, Simia. Both are marked as foreign: Simia has foreign facial features (*peregrina facies videtur hominis atque ignobilis*, 964), and the actor playing Pseudolus would wear the conventional mask of the slave, recognizable by its red hair (1218). The audience will watch as two slaves, visibly foreign in their features, and therefore outsiders on many levels, orchestrate the cheating of the hated pimp.

To be sure, slaves are not the *only* people involved in the overthrow of the arrogant man – often another, younger, free male is involved, who stands to gain something of power or prestige in humbling the older man. The ultimate goal of the trick in *Miles* is to redress the power imbalance between two free men, Pyrgopolynices and Pleusicles, but the slaves and prostitutes gladly lend a hand on account of their dislike for the soldier. Periplectomenus, whom the soldier supposedly cuckolded (a farce, but Pyrgopolynices believes it to be true), exacts his revenge by having Pyrgopolynices stripped naked and beaten, but the actual beating is carried out by Periplectomenus's slaves: Periplectomenus orders his slaves to beat the soldier (1395, 1403); and when the cook threatens to cut off the soldier's genitals (1398–1399), he is given permission by his master (1407). Although Periplectomenus is the architect of Pyrgopolynices's final humiliation, he does not get his hands dirty himself; instead, he outsources that task to the slaves, which adds to the ignominy of the punishment.

In the takedown of the pimp Ballio, Pseudolus nominally works on behalf of the citizen Calidorus (who wants to free his beloved prostitute from the pimp), but like

the clever slave of *Miles Gloriosus*, Pseudolus is an eager accomplice, with a strong desire to embarrass a haughty social superior. Stewart (2008, p. 83) notes that, because the pimp is a social outcast, the audience sees Pseudolus as serving good over evil when he tricks Ballio. Only in *Aulularia* does the clever slave not work on behalf of a free man, but his actions benefit a free man, Lyconides, who secures his beloved's hand in marriage as a result. If the audience had any compunction about a slave scheming against a citizen, those reservations would be allayed by the fact that the slave's actions directly profited the young man in love and helped bring about a successful citizen marriage, the goal of many New Comic plays (Parker 1989; but cf. Chapter 7 in this volume).

I hope to have demonstrated that Euclio, Pyrgopolynices, and Ballio are unified by excess, an excess which helps define the archetypes of the braggart soldier, miser, and greedy pimp. Part of the fun for the audience is watching these characters overact, stubbornly persist in their flaws, and dig themselves deeper and deeper into a hole. The roles provided great amusement for the actors, too, as Roscius became famous for his portrayal of Ballio. The fascination with these characters, however, is owed not just to their excess, but also to their lack of self-awareness, which makes them a prime target for the trickery of slaves and subordinates. Pyrgopolynices, stripped naked and beaten by Periplectomenus's slaves, says that he deserves what he got (*iure factum iudico*, "I judge that this was done rightly," *Mil.* 1435) but acknowledges only his crime of adultery (1436). The "adultery," however, was faked to justify punishing the soldier for his real crime of arrogance, a crime which he never acknowledged and for which he showed no remorse. Likewise, when Pseudolus cheats Ballio, the enraged pimp asks Pseudolus's owner, Simo, to hand the slave over for a beating, thinking Pseudolus to be in the wrong. Simo denies the request, pointing out that he warned Ballio that Pseudolus would trick him (1227), as if to tell him he got no more and no less than he deserved.

Only Euclio takes responsibility for his actions. The ending of *Aulularia* does not survive, but ancient summaries and fragments indicate that Lyconides returns the pot of gold, stolen by his own servant, then Euclio gives it back to Lyconides as dowry. Before Euclio is reunited with his gold, he says, "I am the one who robbed myself, my spirit, and my soul," (*egomet me defrudavi animumque meum geniumque meum*, 724a–5); by including the pronoun *ego*, with the suffix *-met* no less, Euclio emphatically identifies himself as the agent of his own destruction.

For Euclio, Ballio, and Pyrgopolynices, each character's fall from grace is appropriate to his status. A pimp, who commands no respect in Roman society, is cheated out of money and property. An arrogant foreign soldier, who uses his money to purchase the sexual property that a citizen man wants, is stripped naked and flogged by slaves for adultery. The beating is a direct assault on the inviolability to which every free man has a right, a right that the soldier gave away when he committed the alleged adultery. Finally, although the poor citizen Euclio tried to rise above his economic station and was humbled for the attempt, he retained his dignity and status as a free citizen. As the only respectable citizen of the three, he is the only one granted by the playwright the dignity of recognizing and taking responsibility for his own mistakes. Each of these three characters jockey for a position of power within the masculine world, and each is put back in his place by those with even less social power.

FURTHER READING

Part III of Dinter (2019), “The Sociology of Roman Comedy,” is especially relevant to this chapter, but readers will find other sections useful for understanding the world of Roman Comedy. Foxhall and Salmon (1998) offer many chapters of interest for a broader study of masculinity, including Pierce’s on “Ideas of Masculinity in New Comedy” and Heap’s on “Understanding the Men in Menander.” Richlin (2018) provides an excellent overview of the role played by slaves in the performance of Roman Comedy, and of the influence these slaves had upon the text we have today.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Plotting the Romance: Plautus' *Rudens*, *Cistellaria*, and *Poenulus*

Stavros Frangoulidis

Plautus' *Rudens*, *Cistellaria*, and *Poenulus* all contain elements that are the stuff of romance: a sense of cosmic order, tempests, divine interventions, traveling, lovers and family members kept apart, recognitions, reunions, etc. Yet the same plays also feature schemes engineered by wily slaves, along with other elements that are the stock-in-trade of farce.

In her seminal study, Kathleen McCarthy (2000) demonstrates how Plautine drama can be seen as exemplifying the creative interplay of two modes she terms “naturalistic” and “farcical” comedy, both of which satisfy the needs and expectations of a wide range of spectators with differing attitudes toward authority. There is also much to be gained here from looking at individual characters who assume authorial roles and undertake actions with obvious metadramatic propensities, in order to further or obstruct the progress of what may be seen as the romantic plot common to these three plays. In accordance with the general scheme of later ancient romance (Archibald 2004), the eventual (re-)union of family and/or lovers after numerous trials marks the “happy ending” of the three plays examined here.

Looking closely at *Rudens*, we will concentrate on those characters who thwart the desire of the *adulescens*, thereby withholding the progress of the play's plot, versus those who facilitate the erotic goal, thereby advancing the comedy toward its joyful resolution. In *Cistellaria*, characters either add to the trials faced by the young lovers or facilitate their eventual union. Lastly, in *Poenulus*, the *servus callidus* devises two complementary schemes: one to free a young girl from the clutches of a pimp and unite her with his master, and another to establish the girl's freeborn status. Whether closely aligned with romance or not, characters with contrasting strategies are in constant interplay; ultimately, those who oppose comic ideals are defeated. This development often results from some providential force, which makes its presence felt in wondrous ways by

helping those who represent comic ideals, to the detriment of those who oppose them. Comic lovers are thus predestined to triumph.

While the metatheatrical element has been discussed for *Poenulus* (Slater 2000, pp. 149–162; Maurice 2004, pp. 267–290), little attention has been paid to the metadramatic potential of characters as movers of the action in *Rudens* and *Cistellaria*. To do so presupposes a wider understanding of metadrama that goes beyond the functions of the trickster slave (Schiesaro 2003). The aim of the present essay is to focus on individual characters in all three plays, and how their metadramatic strategies either delay events or complement each other and propel the action forward, eventually contributing to the resolution of the plot.

Rudens

The main characters of *Rudens* fall into the following subcategories: those motivated by a wish for wider good, who significantly advance the romance plot (e.g. the god Arcturus, Plesidippus's slave Trachalio, and *senex* Daemones); and those driven by a desire for personal profit, who hold back the merrymaking and thus delay the denouement (the pimp Labrax and slave Gripus).

Contrasting strategies to advance the romance plot are underway even prior to the opening of the action. The god Arcturus assumes a metadramatic role as prologue-speaker, informing the audience that young Plesidippus has fallen in love with a girl named Palaestra, the long-lost daughter of Daemones, an Athenian exiled in Cyrene, and has already paid a deposit to free her from Labrax, the pimp who owns her. But Charmides, a Sicilian guest of Labrax, persuades the pimp to renege on his agreement with Plesidippus and sail away to Sicily to sell his *meretrices* at a higher price there (53–56). The implementation of this scheme involves role playing: Labrax invites Plesidippus to come to Venus's shrine, ostensibly to make a sacrifice and complete the handover of Palaestra, whereas in truth he rents a ship and leaves for Sicily (61–63). The *adulescens* hears rumors of the pimp's planned departure and rushes to the harbor, but he arrives too late. If Labrax were to reach Sicily, the story would end here. But Arcturus intervenes. Aware of the broken promise, he transforms into a mover of the action and raises a storm to punish Labrax for his dishonesty while also helping the girl and her maid (68). This intervention foils the pimp's scheme by destroying the ship; Labrax and his friend lose their possessions at sea; and by divine providence the girls reach the shore, unaware that Palaestra's father lives in the vicinity (72–78). Arcturus's intervention guarantees that the family will be reunited sooner rather than later.

The opening of the play proper presents characters with differing strategies and distinct goals. As one mover of the action, Plesidippus enters looking for the pimp in order to arrest him and obtain the girl (94–95); he also orders his slave Trachalio to meet him at Venus' shrine (305) where, per the agreement, Labrax was to complete the transfer of the girl. Unable to locate Labrax, Plesidippus perceives the pimp's deception (147) and exits when he spots two shipwrecked survivors swimming offshore. His failure to find the *leno* accounts for the lack of plot complication. Trachalio arrives at the shrine, where he meets Palaestra and her companion Ampelisca, who have reached safety and are unaware of events on land. By encountering Ampelisca, Trachalio learns of the pimp's deceit, the

shipwreck, and that the pimp has taken Palaestra's casket containing recognition tokens that could help her identify her parents. Since Labrax placed the casket in his treasure chest, it now apparently lies at the bottom of the sea. This information puts Trachalio in a privileged position, eventually allowing him to implement his master's objective and find the pimp.

The plot progresses with clashes between opposing plans. In competition with the *adulescens*, Labrax searches for the girls, in the hope that he can salvage at least some of his possessions and thus continue his trade. Accompanied by Charmides, Labrax reaches the temple and, learning that the two girls are inside, he bursts in. His impious intrusion elevates him to an instigator of action, triggering Trachalio's exit to make an urgent appeal to the citizens of Cyrene to punish such sacrilege. Calling for help, Trachalio transforms into an inset poet who is determined to prevent the pimp from regaining the girls. The slave now takes over the metadramatic role of the mover of the action from his master, who was unable to spot the pimp upon entering the stage. Trachalio's assumption of a metapoetic role complies with the generic norm wherein slaves are instrumental in achieving their master's objectives; but unlike trickster slaves, Trachalio sets out to free the girls without employing deception.

Trachalio's plan to free the girls competes against Labrax's plan to retain them as his possessions: repeatedly, Labrax's actions largely aim at holding the comedy back, Trachalio's at moving it toward the joyous resolution. Daemones arrives, and from a metadramatic perspective, his assumption of the role of patron stands in opposition to the lack of assistance by Charmides, who is inside the shrine but does not help the pimp regain his possessions. Daemones is a *senex* and therefore cannot face the pimp alone, so he orders his two tough slaves to enter the shrine with him (657–658). This decision proves that he does take initiative, possibly due to his function as patron. The orders that Trachalio then gives to the slaves once again underline his role as framer of the action. The plot advances as the clashing plans of the pimp and Trachalio intermingle, first offstage, then inside the shrine. Daemones and his slaves enter the temple, frustrating Labrax's attempt to direct events toward his interests. The pimp is beaten up, and the girls exit the temple in panic. As prime mover, Trachalio orders the girls to seek refuge at the altar as a fortress he defends (688–693). It remains doubtful, however, whether Trachalio could offer any protection on his own, given his inability to deal with the pimp inside the shrine and his subsequent exit to seek Daemones's aid. The confrontation plays out before the audience. Labrax asserts his right to remove his possessions from the altar, but Trachalio, aware of Palaestra's freeborn status, disputes his right of ownership (712–714). As befitting his trade, Labrax is happy to sell Palaestra at a profit, either to Daemones or, by comic hyperbole, to Venus (726–727). However, Daemones performs his role as a defender in the plan and orders his slaves to thrash Labrax if he attempts to remove the girls from the altar (731). Daemones thus takes the initiative away from the pimp and directs dramatic events toward their resolution.

Trachalio's identification of Palaestra as an Athenian citizen (736–738) and of Ampelisca as potentially freeborn (750–751) highlight the illegality of Labrax's actions: the purchase and sale of freeborn women was banned in Roman society. This form of recognition arouses Daemones's sympathy: the old man recalls the loss of his own daughter, who was abducted by pirates and must be of a similar age to Palaestra. By the wondrous workings

of providence, Daemones protects his daughter unawares. The pimp, however, treats the girls as his possessions that he purchased (745). He comically walks around looking for fire and logs to burn the girls alive and thus bring an end to the action; but Daemones retorts that the pimp will be the one to burn, thus ensuring the play's continuation.

The clash of the two different plans continues even after Trachalio departs to fetch his master, instructing Daemones to protect the girls. Labrax again threatens to pull the girls away from the altar – which would retard the main plot – but Daemones performs Trachalio's metadramatic orders to prevent him from doing so, ensuring the continuation of the romance plot. The independence of Daemones as actor reemerges when he orders his slave to fetch two clubs and curb Labrax's renewed violence. His improvisation successfully keeps the pimp away from the girls. Labrax announces his intention to launch a military-style siege, but the young lover's return invalidates the pimp's empty threats to remove the girls and therefore terminate the play.

Upon his return, the *adulescens* takes over the metadramatic initiative from his slave and drags Labrax to court for breaking their earlier agreement. Charmides accompanies Plesidippus to court to ensure the pimp's conviction, an indication that he acts against his host and a marked contrast with how Daemones cooperates with Trachalio. This episode underlines the absence of any social bonds among criminals. The dragging of Labrax to court signals the victory of Trachalio's metadramatic endeavors to secure the liberation of the girls and greatly assists his master's access to the girl he loves.

The binary opposition between plans recurs in later scenes after Gripus, slave of Daemones, returns from a fishing expedition with a trunk in his net. Believing that the trunk contains gold and silver, he devises a plan with a view to earning his freedom, buying slaves, and building a city named after himself (927–937). This fantasy motivates all of Gripus's self-centered actions. In fabricating his delusional scheme, Gripus assimilates the function of the *servus callidus*, with the aim of earning his freedom with the treasure. Yet he does so by a strategy that, although standard practice in real life (purchasing freedom with money), is not the route to emancipation found in comedy. Slaves in comedy earn their freedom largely as a reward for helping their masters achieve happiness. Eventually, Gripus earns manumission not for his scheming (as happens with Trachalio) but for his role in finding the trunk and therefore assisting his master in finding his lost daughter.

Trachalio learned from Ampelisca that the pimp locked a casket with Palaestra's identity tokens inside his own trunk to prevent her from finding her parents. Upon meeting Gripus carrying the trunk, Trachalio first attempts to earn Gripus's trust, then composes a story in which he discloses that he knows both the thief and the owner of the belongings and, finally, asks his fellow slave whether it is fair to ask for half of the profits (956–961). Gripus agrees, failing to perceive that the tale directly involves him. As composer of fiction, Trachalio evidently assumes the functions of a tricky slave to obtain Palaestra's identity tokens. Here again, two different schemes devised by Gripus and Trachalio clash with each other. This opposition maintains tension: if Gripus were to succeed in his self-serving aim, the reunion at the play's "happy ending" would be delayed, whereas Trachalio once again tries to secure its continuation. Trachalio applies his fictitious tale about the thief and the owner of the belongings to the current situation, claiming to know the owner of the trunk and demanding half of the proceeds. He thus tries to steer events toward his own ends. But in Gripus's version of events, the trunk is the equivalent of a fish, a catch he is entitled

to sell in the market for profit as if it were his slave (974). This claim establishes a parallel with Labrax, who views the girls as his own possessions and dares to negotiate for their sale for profit.

Although the opposition between the two binary schemes continues, Gripus's tale about the trunk-fish does not hold up. Challenged by Trachalio to prove his point, he is unable to do so. Trachalio, in line with his fictitious tale, demands half of the proceeds. Alternatively, he suggests they find an arbitrator to resolve the conflict. In rebutting Trachalio's argument, Gripus proclaims himself to be the owner of the trunk, immune to city laws – a line of argument that works against the development of the romance plot (1024). This constitutes yet another parallel with Labrax, who likewise admits that he does not acknowledge city laws: he views the girls as his own possessions because he has paid money for their purchase (745–747). Gripus eventually agrees to seek arbitration, though only when Trachalio drops the name of Daemones, in the obvious expectation that the latter will take his side as his master. Both parties agree to accept Daemones as arbitrator and therefore as actor in their distinct plans to resolve the conflict.

In the arbitration scene, the two separate schemes continue to clash: each character tries to win over Daemones and therefore advance the plot toward his own ends. Daemones's fairness is evident from the outset: the *senex* gives Trachalio the right to speak first, frustrating Gripus's expectations. In the presence of Daemones, Trachalio becomes more explicit compared to his previous encounter with Gripus. He explains that the trunk contains the casket with Palaestra's identity tokens and that he is now only interested in receiving those tokens. Perhaps Trachalio feels that he can trust the *senex* based on their previous encounter. Trachalio asks Daemones to persuade his slave to show the casket to the girls (1095), helping the romance plot move toward recognition. Gripus, however, is unwilling to show the tokens (1096). He thus holds to his plan to obtain his freedom through the money contained in the trunk, failing to come to terms with the generic rule that comic freedom is obtained through services offered toward a master's happiness. Eventually, at Daemones's request, Gripus hands over the box to settle the case (1128).

In the arbitration scene, Daemones acts as an impartial judge and asks Palaestra to identify the items. Daemones's independence as actor can be justified: he is a leading character, and as such is not accountable for his dramatic function to any other character. With the recognition moving forward, Gripus realizes that he is losing the case and, by extension, his freedom. Here again he fails to understand the generic rule that in comedy manumission can only be earned by aiding one's master to achieve happiness (1154, 1164, 1171). In the recognition scene, Daemones discovers that Palaestra is his long-lost daughter. The joyous resolution of events is entirely due to the victory of Trachalio's metadramatic endeavors, as was the case in his earlier dealings with Labrax. That Palaestra is shown to be a citizen grants legitimacy to her love for Plesidippus and enables the couple to marry.

Although the binary opposition between strategies even reappears at the play's end, one may notice a difference in the way the opposition of metadramatic plans operates. The concluding contrast does not advance the romance plot, the complications of which have now been resolved, but ensures that merrymaking reaches the remaining characters of the play who have not yet been affected by its happy resolution: Labrax, Ampelisca, and Gripus.

Gripus regrets the loss of the recovered treasure but attempts to pursue his earlier plan and thus buy his freedom. He invites anyone who has lost a trunk to look for him. On

returning from court, where he has lost possession of Palaestra, Labrax realizes that Gripus knows the owner of his box and approaches him, in the hope of regaining what went missing in the shipwreck (1297–1298). Gripus and Labrax therefore have two separate aims in mind: Gripus to obtain money for finding the box and Labrax to regain possession of his trunk. When Gripus asks for a reward, Labrax realizes that he cannot recover his possessions unless he pretends to give Gripus the money he asks for (1331–1332). The audience knows that as perjurer Labrax does not intend to keep his promise. The two plans at work here seem to go hand in hand, unlike the opposition observed in the two previous exchanges: (i) between Trachalio and Labrax; and (ii) between Trachalio and Gripus. The audience's expectation that Labrax will break his oath is fulfilled when Gripus goes inside to call Daemones to fetch the trunk and Labrax openly admits that he does not intend to pay Gripus upon receiving the trunk (1353–1356).

At this point the two separate plans come into direct conflict and Daemones must arbitrate. Daemones brings the trunk and gives it to its lawful owner Labrax, explaining that everything is still in place apart from Palaestra's tokens, which have been removed (1358, 1363). Gripus, having fulfilled his own role in the plan, demands that the pimp give him the talent and thus steer events toward his own ends; but the pimp breaks his earlier oath to pay him back, thus thwarting Gripus's scheme (1373–1374). Daemones intervenes once again to settle the dispute, perhaps in a vestige of the Greek original's emphasis on arbitration, advising the pimp to respect the agreement by which he regained the trunk (1386). In settling the case, Daemones seems to adopt a metadramatic perspective in reminding Labrax of the contribution both he and the slave have made to the evolution of the romance plot: Gripus found the trunk and Daemones returned it to the pimp nearly intact (1395–1396). Labrax refuses to give the talent, thus trying to divert the romance plot to serve his personal interest. Gripus also demands the talent, in order to give it to his master and buy his freedom (1391, 1394), failing yet again to grasp that freedom is to be obtained for assisting in his master's happiness and not as a result of money earned. He even accuses Daemones of working for his own benefit (1399). These protests force Labrax to intervene and inform Gripus that the opposite is true: *tibi operam hiquidem dat* ("it's your interest he's looking after," 1403). Here the pimp demonstrates awareness of the generic terms espoused by Daemones in judging the case, indicating his surprising integration into the world of comedy.

Gripus's constant protests force Daemones to speak to Labrax alone and renegotiate his earlier agreement with the slave. Daemones re-evaluates the deal from the perspective of the meta-plot. He proposes that the pimp keep half a talent for Ampelisca's liberation (1409). Ampelisca's manumission is a prerequisite for her marriage to Trachalio. Since Plesidippus has already manumitted his slave as a reward for his metadramatic endeavors in the work (1266), the secondary love-affair can develop into a formal marriage. Daemones also asks to keep the other half talent for Gripus's manumission for retrieving the trunk from the sea and therefore helping in the eventual recognition of Palaestra (1410–1411). For the price of just one talent, Daemones thus manages to liberate two characters rather than one, as Gripus intended (*pace* Stewart 2012, p. 144).

Even after the settlement, Gripus seeks to obtain the money for his manumission. His metadramatic awareness is limited, since even at the end of the plot he remains unaware of the generic rule whereby freedom is acquired in comedy. In the belief that he is a victim

of fraud he threatens to hang himself, making clear his inability to fully incorporate himself into the comic world (1415). Gripus's anxieties regarding freedom may perhaps reach their conclusion when his master invites both Labrax and him for dinner: slaves do not regularly dine with masters (1423). At last, his participation in the dinner may serve as a marker of his dramatic inclusion in the comic scenery.

Cistellaria

Unlike *Rudens*, where conflicting strategies advance or delay resolution of the plot, the rival plans in *Cistellaria* add to the troubles experienced by the *adulescens*. These rival plans have similar objectives and induce characters to collaborate with each other. The transition from conflict to collaboration becomes possible when the *lena* Melaenis, the obstacle to comic bliss, overhears a discussion revealing that she cannot continue her deceit that Selenium is her daughter. The intermingling of plots facilitates the recognition of the girl and fulfillment of the romance plot.

Prior to the stage action, Demipho rapes a virgin named Phanostrata at Sicyon but then flees to Lemnos, where he gets married. Phanostrata gives her newly born child to her servant Lampadio for exposure. A *lena* picks up the child and gives it to her friend Melaenis, also a *meretrix*, who wishes to adopt a child. In agreement with the nameless *lena*, Melaenis devises a deception that the child was fathered by one of her clients (139–146; Gilula 2004, pp. 243–244). After the death of his Lemnian wife, Demipho returns to Sicyon and marries Phanostrata. Having decided to acknowledge the child born of the earlier rape as his own, he orders Lampadio to look for the *lena* whom he saw pick up the infant (182–184). Demipho and his wife therefore become movers of the action. In this plan Lampadio is assigned the role of finding the *lena*.

In this search for the exposed child, which foreshadows a recognition, an intermingled romantic love anticipates marriage (Konstan 1983, p. 104). Alcesimarchus is in love with the lost girl and lives with her, having gained her mother's approval. However, Alcesimarchus's father wants to marry off his son to Demipho's rich daughter from Lemnos. By providence, Selenium will turn out to be the lost daughter from the woman Demipho raped in Sicyon. The father sees to it that his son is secluded in a farmhouse for several days, with a view to keeping him away from his mistress. Viewing this as a breach of faith, Melaenis assumes the metadramatic role of mover of action and summons her daughter back so as to protect her interests. This marks the beginning of the young couple's tribulations, which are a standard feature of many romance plots.

The morning meal staged in the opening scene offers the opportunity for Selenium to act out her mother's order: she asks the *lena* to allow her daughter Gymnasium to stay in Alcesimarchus's house for some days and let Alcesimarchus know the situation after his return from his forced seclusion. Selenium's agitated state of mind marks her change from a happy to a wretched comic lover. Alcesimarchus returns home and learns from Gymnasium of the complication in his affair. In a distraught state of mind, he comically orders his slave to prepare an army and wage a military-style campaign, presumably against the mother, the obstacle to his love, so as to win back his mistress by force. Gymnasium, more skilled in matters of love, advises Alcesimarchus against taking up arms against Amor,

thus driving the situation to extremes. In this war he is bound to lose since he has already been wounded by the god's arrow, meaning that he is already in love. He should rather go to the mother and attempt to win her over (302–303). Alcesimarchus promises to apologize to Melaenis for everything, in the hope of winning her over and reuniting with the girl as his concubine should Selenium's citizenship status remain unclear (304).

The two opposing plans devised by Melaenis and Alcesimarchus now clash (449–527; Cohen 1994, pp. 187–193). Each character tries to direct the plot toward their own ends: Alcesimarchus asks Selenium to return to his house and apologizes to her, but Selenium refuses to meet his request (450–452), thus confirming that she is acting out the metadramatic role of a wretched comic lover, as demanded by her mother. Alcesimarchus then turns to Melaenis to make a similar appeal for forgiveness (455), but she too rejects his appeal. The young man's subsequent oath to marry Selenium (470) confirms that he is acting out his plan as revised by Gymnasium; but Melaenis is again unwilling to take his oath seriously, for fear that Alcesimarchus will eventually abandon her daughter in favor of Demipho's rich daughter from Lemnos (492). By providence Selenium will turn out to be Demipho's other daughter by the woman he raped and then married (Cohen 1994, p. 192). Following Gymnasium's suggestion, Alcesimarchus asks the mother to send her daughter back and thus advance the plot toward his own ends (505); but Melaenis once again refuses to meet his request (506). Archesimarchus's failure to achieve his objective suggests that Melaenis has won the day, reinforcing the standoff.

In the course of the comic action two other plans emerge, but they differ from those examined so far in that they feature collaborating characters with similar objectives. The shift from conflict to collaboration will offer a solution to the troubles of the *adulescens* and the joyous resolution of comic plot. The turning point occurs when Lampadio approaches the *meretrices* in town with a view to finding the *lena* he saw picking up the infant. He eventually locates her and learns important information concerning the exposed infant, which he conveys to Phanostrata. Selenium's mother eavesdrops on this conversation: the *lena* gave the child to the ex-*meretrix* Melaenis to raise as her own, but in the meantime she has allegedly moved abroad. These revelations expose Melaenis's trickery in claiming that Selenium is her own daughter by a client. In her ensuing conversation with Lampadio, Melaenis further learns that by coincidence of fortune Selenium is Demipho's daughter by his second wife. At this point Melaenis perceives that she will not be able to continue the fiction surrounding her adopted daughter and eventually decides to return the girl to her parents for Selenium's benefit, despite the emotional cost (626–630).

In her decision to return the girl to her biological parents, Melaenis appears as an instigator of action. Her initiative complements Demipho's endeavors to find his daughter and will result in her earning gratitude from Selenium's parents. Melaenis also informs Selenium of these developments and of her decision to return her to her parents, involving the girl as actor in her plot. In this plan she also implicates Halisca in her plan with instructions to carry the casket (the titular *cistella*), containing Selenium's birth tokens that will enable the recognition.

The two distinct plans by Demipho and Melaenis develop independently for the greater part of the play. Yet Alcesimarchus appears onstage threatening to commit suicide with a sword in a manner suggestive of a romance plot. This abduction creates a setback to Melaenis's plan. On seeing Selenium, the *adulescens* carries her away to his house. The abduction reproduces the context of Melaenis's earlier demand that Selenium leave

Alcesimarchus's house, marking the beginning of the lover's trials. Furthermore, in the confusion generated onstage, Melaenis's slave woman Halisca loses the casket, signaling her failure to act out her part. Lampadio sees the casket and picks it up.

This chance find, suggestive of providence, signals the intermingling of the two hitherto distinct plans, and this intermingling will eventually lead to the recognition. A key twist in the plot changes the girl's status, as necessary for the happy ending typical of romance: Phanostrata sees the casket Lampadio is holding and recognizes it as her own. Soon Halisca returns onstage, hunting for the very same casket (Telò 2016, pp. 312–314) and generates farce by appealing to the audience for help but receiving no assistance (677–682). Lampadio and Phanostrata, who are observing the scene, discover the person who has lost the casket. While they know it is a mark of identity, it cannot be of much help without its original owner (Ketterer 1986, pp. 34–35). Phanostrata and Lampadio converse with Halisca to establish the casket's owner. In turn, Halisca underlines the consequences of losing the casket (713–716): it will cause misfortune to herself, as Selenium will be unable to recognize her parents and will create a setback to Melaenis's plan. The ensuing identification of the casket's contents by Halisca (735) confirms that the item lost is the one found by Lampadio (Ketterer 1986, p. 35). Hereupon Phanostrata informs Halisca that she already has the casket.

The correlation of the two plans continues to shape how the action unfolds. Phanostrata informs Halisca that she is the girl's mother (745). As the recognition has already taken place, Phanostrata seeks to establish the whereabouts of her daughter (752). Halisca informs her that she is at Alcesimarchus's house, thus contributing to the joyful end of Demipho and his wife's metadramatic endeavors to find their daughter. Halisca also asks that the casket be returned to her, so that she can assist her mistress Melaenis in realizing her plan to present the girl to her parents and earn their gratitude. Once the casket has been returned, all characters withdraw to Alcesimarchus's house for the joyous reunion offstage.

The metadramatic dimension of Demipho's plan may also become clear at the close of the play. On hearing the happy news that his daughter has been found, Demipho heads straight to Alcesimarchus's house. Lampadio reports to his master that through his efforts Demipho has increased his family, arguing that he himself was the plan's originator (*mea opera*, 777). However, Demipho counters that he would prefer to gain more children through his own efforts. He thus also lays authorial claim to the plan, of course with Phanostrata's agreement (*mi opera*, 778). This could perhaps explain the absence of any reference to Lampadio's manumission, unlike the slaves in *Rudens*, who are granted freedom for contributing to the master's happiness. The recognition of Selenium as Demipho and Phanostrata's daughter allows Alcesimarchus to marry her, as class differences between the two lovers have been eliminated. This helps to redefine Alcesimarchus's love for Selenium as one that could eventually lead to marriage, in compliance with the girl's wish not to be called a *meretrix* (83).

Poenulus

The combination of opposing binary schemes by different characters in *Rudens* and *Cistellaria* is entirely absent from *Poenulus*. This comedy features two schemes devised by the slave Milphio, both directed against the pimp Lycus, who owns Adelphasium and

Anterastilis. The schemes complement each other but have different comic objectives: the first scheme intends to set the two girls free and secure Adelphasium as concubine for his master Agorastocles, while the second goes beyond securing her manumission to reestablish their status as freeborn, even aristocratic, women.

Agorastocles is in love with Adelphasium but is denied access to her by Lycus, who exploits the young man's love in the hope of driving up the eventual sale price for the girl (100–102). Milphio assumes the role of a comic poet and hatches a plot involving Collybiscus, another of Agorastocles's slaves, which will enable him to liberate the girls. The scheme functions as an inset comedy in that it requires role play (Maurice 2004, pp. 269–278): Collybiscus is to appear as a soldier seeking paid entertainment at the procurer's residence. The *advocati* will introduce the soldier to the pimp and will then testify as witnesses in the case Agorastocles brings against Lycus.

This scheme plays out onstage while the girls are being initiated as professional courtesans at the temple of Venus. As the plot unfolds, Lycus's willingness to offer Collybiscus service will get him in trouble with the law, since it is illegal to offer asylum to fugitive slaves or accept any money from them without their master's permission (184–185). The revelation that Collybiscus is owned by Agorastocles provides the legal conditions for suing the procurer. Since Lycus will be unable to pay the compensation set by the praetor, all of his property, including the two sisters, will then be awarded to the plaintiff (185–186). Yet while this ruse will allow Agorastocles to secure his sweetheart's freedom without paying a fee, in accordance with comic conventions, it will not bring about any change in her social status. If the court case were to go ahead, Adelphasium would merely become Agorastocles's courtesan. This development would fail to put the relationship on a permanent footing, since only free girls are legally entitled to marry. In the comic world ruled by providence, however, conditions now arise for a radical change in Adelphasium's social status: in the end, she will be able to marry Agorastocles, lending the comedy a truly happy ending.

The turning point in the action is reached when Milphio strikes up a conversation with Syncerastus, the pimp's slave. Syncerastus states his wish that the pimp be ruined, and thus his willingness to assume a metadramatic role as the instrument for his master's downfall, but he is too afraid to do so (865; Slater 2004, pp. 296–297). Milphio, on the other hand, has already shown himself capable of taking on the pimp. Having earned the trust of Syncerastus, he learns the secret empowering him to assume an authorial role and destroy the pimp: both Adelphasium and Anterastilis are Carthaginians, and the pimp bought them along with their nurse, even though he knew they were freeborn (893–900). This makes him liable to punishment, as purchase of the freeborn was forbidden in Roman society. Armed with this information, Milphio can once again assume the role of comic poet, hatch a new scheme against Lycus, and thereby propel the comic plot toward its joyful resolution. Rather than simply securing the conditions for the girls' release from the procurer, his trick can now help them regain their lost social status and even open the prospect of marriage. Milphio also promises to secure Syncerastus's freedom in reward for this valuable information and assistance in furthering the action (910). Here is yet another instance of how, in the world of Plautine comedy, a slave achieves manumission by contributing to the meta-plot, which in this case involves the recognition of the girls and everything that ensues.

Hanno, the girls' father, has come to Calydon in search of his lost niece and daughters after extensive wanderings. In a characteristically romantic turn, providence soon leads to an encounter with Agorastocles, whom he recognizes as his nephew. Hanno arrives just as the girls are returning from the temple following their initiation as courtesans. In the second ruse, Milphio turns to Agorastocles and asks him to claim that Adelphasium and her sister are freeborn. The young man's refusal to do so is understandable, given the absence of witnesses. Milphio is thus forced to turn to Hanno and ask him to step into the role, claiming that the girls are his abducted daughters from Carthage (1101–1102). Hanno is happy to do so, since his arrival in Calydon is motivated by the desire to find his daughters. This role will also enable him to assist his nephew, who is in love with the older of the two girls. The fact that Hanno is then recognized by the nurse foreshadows the recognition scene involving Adelphasium and Anterastilis. From that point onwards, the slave's comic meta-plot blends with the romance plot. This testifies to the ingeniousness of Milphio as comic poet (*pace* Maurice 2004, pp. 278–287).

The elevation in status of Adelphasium and Anterastilis from slaves to free, aristocratic daughters occurs following their return from Venus' temple. On meeting the girls, Hanno tests them by presenting himself as an *amicus* and therefore a potential lover (1211–1213; Franko 1995, 1996, pp. 439–440) and then as one intending to sue the girls in court, as if they had citizens' rights, for stealing his free daughters from him (1225, 1229). Hanno's ingenious approach to his daughters may be due to his wish to facilitate their transition from fully initiated courtesans to the status of freeborn citizens from an aristocratic family in Carthage (cf. Starks 2000, p. 176; Maurice 2004, p. 285; Moodie 2015, p. 188).

After the test, Hanno terminates suspense and reveals his true identity to his daughters. At this point the metadrama links with the romance plot. Hanno is shown to be the girls' father, and here the core plot broadens the perspective of the meta-plot: the Carthaginian's supposed role in the second ruse turns out to tally with the play's fictional reality. This development is further evidence of the slave's ingenuity as a metadramatic character. Seen from a generic perspective, his actions amount to a meta-plot aimed at securing erotic bliss for the *adulescens*.

Conclusion

The comic characters in *Rudens*, *Cistellaria*, and *Poenulus* can thus be seen to employ a range of meta-dramatic strategies aimed at overcoming the actions of those who oppose comic ideals. In *Rudens*, Arcturus and Trachalio undertake metadramatic initiatives facilitating the reunion and merrymaking at the resolution of the play; on the other hand, Labrax and Gripus advance their own schemes and plans, motivated by a desire for personal profit, which stands in the way of the happy ending. In *Cistellaria*, the lover Alcesimarchus assumes a metadramatic role of distraught lover in his attempt to regain possession of Selenium from her foster mother Melaenis. The happy resolution becomes possible when Melaenis abandons her false narrative and returns the girl to her biological parents, who are also engaged in metadramatic endeavors to find their lost child. In *Poenulus* the trickster slave concocts two complementary metadramatic schemes to bring about his master's happiness. As is evident, the metadramatic devices discussed above can

either delay or expedite the “happy ending” typical of romance. This is ultimately achieved through the workings of providence, which aids those who promote New Comedy ideals, to the disadvantage of those who oppose them, thus ultimately allowing romance to triumph on stage.¹

NOTE

- 1 I would like to express my warmest thanks to the editors for illuminating comments on an earlier version of this essay and to Alessandro Schiesaro, David Konstan, Ben Petre and Katerina Philippides for helpful discussions.

FURTHER READING

Fontaine (2010) explores Plautus’s wit, with *Rudens* and *Poenulus* receiving ample discussion. Sonnenschein (1901) offers a useful commentary on *Rudens*. Leach (1974) traces the archetypal birth of Venus in two scenes of *Rudens*. Connors (2016) illuminates striking parallels between *Casina*’s narrative of abandonment and its equivalent in *Cistellaria*. Moore (1998) examines the *Cistellaria* epilogue, and Slater (1992) and Sharrock (2009) the *Poenulus* prologue. Moodie’s (2015) commentary on *Poenulus* includes metatheatrical interpretations and performance criticism alongside explication of the text, while Starks, Panciera, and Brunelle et al. (1997) provide a video recording of *Poenulus* on stage.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Tragicomedy and Paratragedy: Plautus's *Amphitruo*, *Captivi*, and *Rudens*

Walter Stockert

Introduction: Tragicomedy and Paratragedy in Plautus?¹

Plautus coins the term *tragicomoedia* in the prologue of his *Amphitruo*. Mercury, the speaker of this prologue, first teases the audience by suggesting that they are about to see a tragedy, then he changes his mind and suddenly speaks of a comedy:

*Post argumentum huius eloquar tragoediae.
quid? contraxistis frontem quia tragoediam
dixi futuram hanc? deus sum, commutavero.
eandem hanc, si voltis, faciam <iam> ex tragoedia
comoedia ut sit omnibus isdem versibus.*

Then I'll explain the plot of this tragedy.
What? You frowned because I said this was going
to be a tragedy? I'm a god, I'll transform it.
If you want, I'll instantly turn this same play from tragedy
into comedy with all the same verses. (51–55)

But neither of these proposals satisfies the audience or Mercury himself, as he lightheartedly says. In this “dilemma” Mercury has the splendid idea of calling the play a *tragicomoedia*:

*Faciam ut commixta sit; <sit> tragico[co]moedia.
nam me perpetuo facere ut sit comoedia,
reges quo veniant et di, non par arbitror.*

*quid igitur? quoniam hic servos quoque partes habet,
faciam sit, proinde ut dixi, tragico[co]moedia.*

I'll make it a mixed play: it'll be a tragi-comedy.
For me to make it totally a comedy,
where kings and gods appear, I think it's just not right.
What then? Since a slave plays a role here too,
I'll make it, like I said, a tragicomedy. (59–63)

The term *tragicomoedia* is emphasized by strong repetition (59–63), and even if it is not used later in the play (where the *Amphitruo* will be called a “Comedy” in 88, 96, and 868), it seems an appropriate term to characterize *Amphitruo* and other plays. And yet the concept of “tragicomedy” is not Greek as far as we know. We only hear of a *komo-dotragodia* by Anaxandrides (26 K-A.), a poet of the “Middle Comedy,” and others (Hanink 2014, p. 264). It looks as if Plautus is emphasizing the term because it is a new invention.

Aristotle in *Poetics*, the most important theoretical treatise on ancient drama, does not discuss mixed genres. But his treatment of the “pure” dramatic genres, tragedy and comedy, can give us considerable help in our discussion of comedies that may be called “tragicomic.” (Admittedly, there are uncertainties with regard to his treatment of comedy caused by the loss of *Poetics* Book 2). Aristotle defines the dramatic genres with regard to construction of the plot (*muthos* or *sustasis pragmaton*), characters (*ethos*, including what the philosopher calls *dianoia*, “expression of thought”), language (*lexis*), and, finally, the intended “aesthetic reception” by the audience. The action of tragedy in its ideal form, with material mostly taken from Greek myth, is clearly structured; its parts are connected by plausibility and necessity (*kata to eikos kai to anankaion*), and it is characterized by *peripeteia eis dustuchian* (the catastrophic downfall of the hero). Comedy’s plot construction has always been looser than tragedy’s, and sometimes even paratactic, as we can see in Aristophanic comedy. Comedy usually leads toward *eutuchia* (lucky outcome) and a solution of the problems (*lusis*). The characters of tragedy according to Aristotle belong to the category of “people better than we are” in their social status and their *ethos*, while those of comedy are generally close to our own status (*kath’ hemas*) or even of lesser value. The downfall of the tragic hero happens because of a disastrous mistake (*hamartia megalē*), and while comic characters also make mistakes, these do not cause extreme suffering or pain (“a mistake and mark of shame, but lacking in pain or destruction,” Arist., *Poet.* 1449a33). Tragedy’s language is elevated and solemn, while comedy by definition prefers to use the speech of everyday life. If, finally, emphasis is laid upon the reception by the audience, we hear from Aristotle (*Poet.* 1449b27) that people react to the action of the tragedy with “pity and horror,” ἔλεος (*eleos*) καὶ φόβος (*phobos*), while comedy’s aim is to raise laughter and hilarity (ibid. 1449a31–36).

After this glance at Aristotle’s classification of tragedy and comedy, we feel entitled to use the term “tragicomedy” for a few plays that seem to be a “mixture” of these two basic genres and their characteristics.² And we will use these Aristotelian categories for our discussion of three Plautine plays – *Amphitruo*, *Captivi*, and *Rudens* – even if they apply differently to each of these plays.

Before we start our interpretations, we must have a look at a kindred feature, at paratragedy, the comical parody of tragedy (Rau 1967 on Aristophanic parodies of Euripidean tragedies). If we disregard the special case of *Amphitruo* in Plautus' plays, we may speak of a paratragic register of language and meter, often combined with direct reference to tragic verses or passages. By these allusions and the "tragic" style, characters give special emphasis to an idea or underline their heightened emotion. Paratragedy often happens in an incongruous manner, and by this inappropriateness it has the potential to raise laughter, especially in a well-informed audience (Bianco 2007; Sharrock 2009, pp. 204–205; Manuwald 2014, p. 589).

A glance at two passages outside the three plays of this study can give an impression of paratragedy in Plautus. In *Pseudolus* the trickster announces that he will address his master pompously (*magnifice*, 702), and he does it in a high-flown manner: *Io, te, te, turanne, te, te ego qui imperitas Pseudolo, / quaero, quoi ter trina triplicia tribus modis tria gaudia [sc. dem]* ("Ho! Ho! You, you, Majesty! You, who rule Pseudolus, you I seek to bestow upon you thrice three times triple glad tidings in triplicate!" 703–704). We do not know whether the poet alludes here to a Roman tragedy or just uses similar style, but another character classifies his words as paratragic: *ut paratragedat carnufex!* ("How the rogue para-tragedizes!" 707; cf. Sharrock 2009, p. 163). *Paratragedare* occurs only here in ancient Latin.

Another example we find in the madness scene in *Menaechmi*, where the Syracusan brother faces the attacks of his twin's wife and father-in-law. When they call him "mad" because of his inexplicable behavior, he decides to adopt the role of a madman (the poet alludes to Euripides' *Heracles*):

*Euhoe atque euhoe, Bromie, quo me in silvam venatum vocas?
audio, sed non abire possum ab his regionibus,
ita illa me ab laeva rabiosa femina adservat canes.*

Euhoe! Euhoe! Bromius, where into the forest do you call me to hunt?
I hear, but I am unable to leave these regions,
the way that rabid bitch eyes me on my left. (835–837)

Menaechmus presents himself as a follower of Bacchus, a twist which is comic by its inappropriateness (Gratwick 1993, p. 215; Slater 2015, pp. 302–303). Playing his role to excess and even attacking the two strangers, he finally gets rid of them. Clearly, this pseudo-madness does not lead toward disaster, but complicates the twin-comedy with its confusions.

Paratragedy is part of the swiftly shifting registers of normal comic style; it certainly does not aspire to the status of "genre."

Amphitruo

Amphitruo is a drama unique among Roman comedies: its action is determined by a Greek myth, and myth is the source of plots for tragedy, as Aristotle (*Poet.* 1451b24) points out. The myth of Jupiter, who seduces Amphitruo's wife Alcmena, is well-known (Stärk 1982). Additionally, *Amphitruo*'s plot depends upon other features typical of tragedy. For example,

the protagonist returns from a war fought by the Thebans against the Teleboans, and wars are typical of tragedy, not of comedy, even if in Plautus' *Captivi* and in Menander's *Aspis* we do have a war in the background of the action. In our play there are two messenger-songs with tragic characteristics, both sung by slaves: one about the heroic battle of the Thebans against the Teleboans, the other about the miracles in the palace of Amphitruo (Sharrock 2009, pp. 287–289); and messenger-speeches reporting terrible events are typical of tragedy. We see characters in “tragic situations” caused by supernatural powers (above all Alcmena, and to a lesser degree Amphitruo and Sosia); and finally the “solution” by Jupiter as a *deus ex machina* is a feature which is not found elsewhere in surviving Roman comedy. All these features might corroborate Lefèvre's theory (1982), which has been accepted by several scholars, that a Greek tragedy is the direct (or indirect) original of our play (Schmidt 2003; Sharrock 2009, p. 111).

But Plautus' *Amphitruo* is staged as a comedy (for its comic features, see Segal 1968, pp. 171–191; Benz 1999; Lefèvre 1999; Chapters 6 and 31 in this volume). Metatheater, generated by a close cooperation of characters (especially Mercury and Jupiter) with the audience, is characteristic of comedy, and overall, the central motif of the “double” is a feature of comic action (García Hernandez 2001, pp. 269–348), as we also find it in *Menaechmi*. Benz (1999, p. 64) rightly insists on the clowneries of Sosia (and his double) in the initial scene, the longest scene in Plautus, and there are typical Plautine “Prügelszenen” (thrashing-scenes).

With regard to *ethos*, Aristotle's second criterion, we have here a mixture of tragic and comic characters (lines 60–63, cited above). The human characters of the play are in a position of total ignorance about the miraculous events. They react differently to disastrous happenings: the slave Sosia, who meets his double in the first scenes of the play, refuses out of cowardice to undergo further risk: even if he has not really been persuaded that he has lost his identity to his stronger alter ego, he does not risk more beating. So he becomes a really comic character, even if his situation might be labeled as “tragic,” as Schmidt (2003, p. 92) has shown. Amphitruo has already been introduced by Sosia to the absurd situation when he appears on stage together with his slave. He cannot accept the slave's tale, since he is in the same quasi-tragic situation as Sosia: his wife insists that she has received him the evening before and she can even “prove” it by presenting the golden *patera* (bowl) that she has accepted from Pseudo-Amphitruo. When he realizes that he has been cuckolded, he reacts in an aggressive manner, but his behavior is not significantly different from that of people of everyday life, a characteristic which Aristotle gives to the characters of comedy. When he finally decides to react in a manner reminiscent of a tragic plot and to kill everybody in the palace, Jupiter's thunderbolt prevents his heroic attack (Schmidt 2003, pp. 95–96).

But more than anyone else, Alcmena finds herself in tragic circumstances: unknowingly she has become an adulterous wife, a situation unique in Greek New Comedy or in the *fabula palliata*. Like all the human characters, she falls victim to divine power. This traditional view of Alcmena as a “tragic character” and as an honest and pious woman has been challenged by prominent scholars (Christenson 2000, pp. 37–45; Dutsch 2008, pp. 153–156), who emphasize the comic potential in Alcmena's situation and appearance, above all her presentation as a pregnant woman, and her “interest in sex” shortly before giving birth. But in my view, Plautus laid his emphasis upon the tragic *hamartia* (the tragic mistake)

of the “guiltless guilty” heroine. Especially her expressions of injured innocence (esp. 882–890; 901–902; 925–927) are spoken in an earnest way. Of course a producer is free to emphasize either the tragic *or* the comic potential of the play.

When we turn to language (*lexis*), with some reference to meter and music as well, we find a major difference between the scenes that are spoken or chanted (the recitative) in language close to that of everyday life, and the three *monodies* (songs in different meters), where *vocem comoedia tollit* (“comedy elevates its expression”, Hor. *Ars P.* 93). Two of these songs belong to slaves (Sosia and Bromia), one to Alcmena. The “tragic mode” seems to give special flavor to special scenes. As I have argued elsewhere (Stockert 1995), the language of the gods does not differ significantly from that of their human counterparts. At least one cannot argue that Jupiter and Mercury are distinguished by especially high-flown language.

Sosia’s song is embedded between an entrance-song, overheard by Mercury, and his encounter with the god (Oniga 1985). After a chanted recitative (186–217), the narrative of the battle, besides artful meter of mostly cretic verses, has an unusually large repertory of word- and sound-figures. I cite only a short sample (231–236):

*Pro se quisque id quod quisque <et> potest et valet,
edit, ferro ferit, tela frangunt, boat
caelum fremitu virum, ex spiritu atque anhelitu
nebula constat, cadunt vulnerum vi [et] viri.
denique ut voluimus nostra superat manus:
hostes crebri cadunt, nostri contra ingruunt.*

Each and every man for himself – what he can and is able –
he gives forth; he strikes with his sword; spears shatter;
heaven howls with the moaning of men; from their panting and gasping
a fog arises; men fall from the force of their wounds.
Finally, as we wished, our troops triumph:
the enemy falls in heaps, our men advance against them.

The highly ecstatic meter, underscored by the music of the *tibicen* (player of the double-pipes), the short cola, coupled expressions (*spiritu et anhelitu*), asyndeta, strong alliteration (*ferro ferit ... frangunt ... fremitu; crebri cadunt ... contra*), and assonance (*vulnerum vi viri*) all combine to convey the intensity of the battle.

In her song about human life Alcmena mixes the emotions of happiness and sorrow and uses exclusively bacchiacs, a meter accommodated to the *persona* of a dignified woman (Tobias 1979; Moore 2012, pp. 276–281). She proclaims: *ita dis est placitum voluptatem ut maeror comes consequatur*, “Thus ‘tis pleasing to the gods: grief should follow pleasure as its companion” (635–636). Alcmena applies this principle to her feelings after the departure of her husband. The song culminates in a long *laudatio* of *virtus* (648–653; cf. 839–842; Dutsch 2008, pp. 153–154):

*Virtus praemium est optimum;
virtus omnibus rebus anteit profecto:
....*

*virtus omnia in sese habet, omnia assunt
bona quem penest virtus.*

Virtus is the best reward,
Virtus surpasses all things indeed:
....
Virtus contains all goods within itself, all goods
are in the power of the one with *Virtus*.

The complex term *virtus* (= manliness) paradoxically refers both to her husband's virtue and her own female *virtus*. *Virtus*, rarely used for women in Plautus (Dutsch 2008, p. 154 n. 17), gains prominence by its position at the beginning and the end of the passage, by anaphora and epiphora. *Virtus* in Rome is a central ethical norm, which seems more appropriate for tragedy than for comedy (cf. Manuwald 2014, p. 584 for similar wording in Ennius): Alcmena gains tragic profile by this song as well.

When Jove's thunderbolt, however it was staged, has finished the action proper – here we are in the realm of *opsis*, the visual element, “least artful” for Aristotle – we hear a “messenger-song” from the female slave Bromia, mainly composed in iambo-trochaic “long verses” (Dutsch 2008, pp. 118–119; Slater 2015, pp. 292–293). Her report about the terrifying events, above all the miraculous birth of twins and Hercules' first heroic deed, must have been as awe-inspiring for Plautus' audience as for the characters in the drama. The high register of her song has the function of underlining these happenings. The climax occurs at 1062, an isolated anapaestic octonarius: *strepitus crepitus sonitus tonitrus: ut subito, ut prope, ut valide tonuit!* (“Crashing and clashing and smashing and gnashing: how suddenly, closely and strongly it thundered!”). The rolling anapaests (dactyls in this translation) that accelerate the speed of the song, the highly elevated language, which is reminiscent of tragedy, and the rich figures of style (asyndeta, alliteration, and homoeoteleuta) contribute to the overwhelming pathos of the passage. In the following recitative Bromia tells her master what has happened, and he now reacts with the Aristotelian *phobos* (“horror”) a tragedian wants to inspire in his audience: *nam mihi horror membra misero percipit dictis tuis*. (“for terror seizes my limbs at your words, pitiful me,” 1118). Finally Jupiter appears as a *deus ex machina*, the machine-god of Greek tragedy, and in simple iambs (the prosaic meter underlines his Olympian emotional detachment) exculpates Alcmena and makes everything clear. Lefèvre (1999, pp. 44–45) is certainly right when he insists that the ending belongs to a category different from the main body of the play: the play returns to the world of myth.

To conclude, let us think about the audience's reaction to those parts of the play that are not purely comical. When the spectators witness how humans (Sosia, Amphitruo, and above all Alcmena) are treated by their counterparts, the gods, they probably develop a modified form of *eleos* (pity). The evoking of a truly tragic reaction of pity and horror, though, is mostly avoided through the superior knowledge about the happy ending, which the audience has been given by the prologue, and by the inserted information-monologues of the gods. Presumably Plautus added these speeches to offset or preempt tragic emotions. On the one hand, with a happy ending in prospect, several parts of the drama, especially the scenes of Sosia with Mercury and Sosia with Amphitruo, seem to be able to

raise unrestrained laughter. On the other, Jupiter's maltreatment of Alcmena may raise pity (the god is really heartless, if gods are supposed to have a heart). And horror is certainly an appropriate reaction to Jove's final intervention and appearance (however it was staged), and to the events that are narrated by the slave woman. But the end of the play could also evoke ambivalent feelings, even if Amphitruo says "yes and amen" to Jupiter's demands and declares himself happy to have him as his rival in love.

Captivi

As Manuwald (2014, p. 586) rightly argued, *Captivi* is a particular form of comedy – as indeed the author himself tells us. We have here several "tragic" and "comic" features (but cf. Chapter 8, pp. 126–131). It does not seem probable that a Greek tragedy was the basis of the play, nor a *praetexta* as Lefèvre (1998, pp. 36–37) has hesitantly suggested. Kraus's (1977) suggestion that the Greek model was a comedy close to Menander's style is highly plausible. In the prologue Plautus insists that *Captivi* is special (54–62): many of the typical traits of comedy do not appear here, such as either indecent language (*spurcidici* versus "dirty lines") or the characters of a *periurus leno*, *meretrix mala*, or *miles gloriosus* ("no perjuring pimp, no wicked prostitute, no boastful soldier"). Nonetheless, *Captivi* is not a tragedy, even if a war (58–60) has been fought in its background as in *Amphitruo* and Menander's *Aspis* (Kraus 1977, pp. 165–166; Raffaelli 2009, pp. 152–153; Slater 2015, pp. 290–292). The prologue-speaker assures us: *nam hoc paene iniquomst comico choragio conari desubito agere nos tragoediam* ("for it's almost wrong if we suddenly try to stage a tragedy with our comedy costuming," 61–62). And in the epilogue the *caterva* (the ensemble) refers to the special action of the play:

*spectatores, ad pudicos mores facta haec fabula est,
neque in hac subigitationes sunt neque ulla amatio
nec pueri suppositio neque argenti circumductio,
neque ubi amans adulescens scortum liberet clam suum patrem.*

Spectators, this play was fashioned to promote chaste morals,
and in it there are no naughty bits, nor any love affair,
nor changelings, nor money-swindling,
nor scene where a young lover frees a whore behind his dad's back. (1029–1032)

As we see, the action (*sustasis pragmaton*) of *Captivi* is said to differ significantly from the usual form of comedy. The situation of the main characters, Hegio and Tyndarus, is for extended passages of the play really tragic, especially for Tyndarus as a freeborn prisoner of war (Petrone 1983, p. 59; McCarthy, pp. 167–168). Some scenes of *Captivi* come close to a tragicomedy in the modern sense: they are comic and tragic at the same time. A look at the action will be the best way to show this tragicomic potential of this play.

The prologue-speaker gives the main points of the action. One son of the Aetolian Hegio was abducted as a child and sold to a rich man in Elis. This man gave the boy to his own son, who was of similar age. Now these two, Philocrates and Hegio's son Tyndarus, have become prisoners of war, a feature that is not found elsewhere in Roman comedy.

Hegio has bought them in the hope of exchanging them for his own son, now prisoner of the Eleans. The prologue insists on Tyndarus' extraordinary situation: *ita nunc ignorans suo sibi servit patri* ("so now without knowing it, he's slave to his own father," 50). And the poet underlines the existential plight with a maxim: *homunculi quanti sunt quom recogito!* ("mere mortals! Of what insignificance they are, when I ponder it!" 51). Plautus anticipates here the conflicts between father and son, which come very close to tragedy. Now the two captives have thought out a trick to secure freedom for Philocrates, the master: they have changed clothes and "character," before they came on stage. So the audience expects (i) the anagnorisis of Tyndarus and (ii) the success of the intrigue of the two captives (Konstan 1983, p. 58).

The play proper begins with its only purely comic figure, the parasite Ergasilus, who in his own eyes (absurdly for the audience) is in as tragic a situation as Hegio's son: nobody wants to feed him now. Hegio appears and, changing the heavy chains of the two captives for lighter ones, he shows his mild character. In a rather lighthearted discussion the old man and the parasite speak about Hegio's hope of winning back his son in exchange for the rich prisoner. Philocrates and Tyndarus are allowed by their guards to speak with each other without being overheard. Both men want to make sure that their ruse is successful. Tyndarus demands that his master keep his promise and return with Hegio's son; Philocrates implores Tyndarus to play his role without fault. And indeed the two captives do play their roles brilliantly. Before their new master they play out their precarious situation with earnest overtones, which are clear for the partner and for the audience, but not for Hegio. More than anything Tyndarus reminds the other of the sacrifice he has undergone for the liberation of his master. Philocrates' reaction also is full of double meaning: *nam quasi servus [meus] esses, nihilo setius / <tu> mihi obsequiosus semper fuisti* ("for as if you'd been my slave, you always were no less obedient to me," 417–418). The spectators understand all the ambiguities: Tyndarus is Philocrates' slave, but also freeborn. Hegio, impressed and deceived in a kind of "tragic mistake," weeps and praises the *liberale ingenium* (free nature/disposition) of the two tricksters (418–419). We may assume *eleos* (pity) for the old man on the audience's side, but joy and laughter for the success of the trick at the same time: tragicomedy at its best (Petron 1983, p. 62; Blänsdorf 2002, p. 74). The trick has succeeded, but not for long.

After a short intermezzo with Ergasilus, who has not yet found an invitation to dinner, we see Hegio in his tragic triumph. In a *canticum* (498–515) he exults, while Tyndarus, who sees Aristophontes, Philocrates' companion, arriving together with Hegio, reacts with horror. Presumably the audience may also feel a frisson of horror: the ruse will be detected since this man knows Tyndarus from Elis. But Tyndarus is not only a tragic figure in that, like Pylades in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, he risks his life for a friend, but also a slave of comedy who, even in hopeless situations, comes up with a plan. He decides to convince Hegio of Aristophontes' madness. At first he has some success, since Hegio is perplexed when Aristophontes calls him "Tyndarus," but – as the audience has certainly foreseen with horror – the slave cannot retain control of the situation, and the ruse is detected. In some passages of the ensuing inquiry the poet plays with the complex situation again, e.g. Aristophontes' *tun tete gnatum memoras liberum?* ("You claim that you are free-born?" 577). Aristophontes hits a point whose implications cannot be understood by anybody on stage, a clear example of tragic irony because of the superior knowledge of

the audience. The enraged Hegio orders heavy chains for Tyndarus and sends him – his own son, as the audience knows – to the stone quarries to certain death. According to Aristotle (*Poet.* 1453b19 ff.), such actions, where close relations in their ignorance maltreat each other, are the most tragic (Petron 1983, p. 61). The tragic feelings of horror and pity are mitigated only by the comic perspective of a “happy ending” (Sander-Pieper 2008, pp. 101–103). In the final discussion Tyndarus gives himself a heroic air: he who dies gloriously does not die at all, but is preserved in his fame (*qui per virtutem periiit, at non interit*, 690), a pithy sentence worthy of a tragic hero. Hegio has to admit that he would have loved a man who would have done the same for his son (715), but this confession enrages him even more, and he sends Tyndarus to the stone quarries (723) to do the heaviest work. The informer Aristophontes returns to prison; the mild man Hegio has undergone a complete change of mind (Kraus 1977, pp. 167–168).

But a comedy cannot have such a tragic finale: Ergasilus arrives running with the joyful message (778), a kind of comic messenger speech. At the harbor he has seen Hegio’s son Philopolemus and Philocrates and, finally, as a surprise for everybody, Stalagmus, the slave who abducted Hegio’s other son a long time ago. Hegio sings a short song of joy (923–927). But when Philocrates wants his slave back, he has to confess what he has done to him in his rage. From the slave Stalagmus, who presents himself as a real *furcifer* (scoundrel/villain), Hegio hears that his long-lost son had been bought by Philocrates’ father; and now everything becomes clear: Tyndarus is Hegio’s son. The old man now realizes his tragic mistake (cf. Kraus 1977, p. 166): against his personal nature he has inflicted terrible punishment upon his own son (993–997). Tyndarus has suffered dreadfully in the stone quarries, more than sinners in the underworld (998–1000). When Hegio welcomes him as his son, Tyndarus must think it a joke. But then he hears from Philocrates that this slave abducted him from his father Hegio 20 years ago. The punishment of Stalagmus is announced en passant as he receives Tyndarus’ chains. The reconciliation of father and son is not played out – to the advantage of the play, it is delayed to “tomorrow”; to “never,” we could say with Dunsch (2005). The play does not end in joy but in more of a quiet mood (Blänsdorf 1996, p. 150; Moore 1998, p. 191; McCarthy 2000, p. 207).

Rudens

Rudens (“The Rope”) is one of the most brilliant of Plautus’s plays, with a setting close to the sea and with a great variety of action. Manuwald (2014, p. 587) rightly insists that “despite all variation and the addition of ‘tragic’ elements the basic plot of *Rudens* remains closer to a standard comedy setup than do those of *Amphitruo* or *Captivi*.” On the other hand Marx (1928, pp. 274–278) detects “tragicomedy.” There are several features that are typical of tragedy: the stage-setting with temple and priestess beside Daemones’ house, the shipwreck, the motif of supplication (*hikesia*). And there are the “paratragic” songs of the girls in a hopeless situation. But in the main *Rudens* is a recognition comedy about whose comic potential one may consult Lefèvre (2006) and Raffaelli (2014).

The prologue-god presents himself as Arcturus, a splendid star, whose main task is to identify good people (characterized by *pietas* and *fides*, see 11 and 29) and wicked ones (here especially the perjurers, 13–14.). Arcturus insists that the gods in heaven are responsible for justice in the world, turning everything to the advantage of good people and to

the misfortune of the wicked (Sharrock 2009, pp. 208–209; Slater 2015, p. 288). Marx (1928) sees here a significant difference from Menander's world, where everything is under the control of Tyche / Fortuna, and he thinks that we come close to the world of real tragedy. But the prologue's main task is to give the setting and hypothesis of the play: the good old Daemones living in a house on stage; the freeborn girl (Palaestra) in the hands of a pimp (Labrax), who tries to cheat her lover (Plesidippus) out of his deposit by sailing away to Sicily; the shipwreck brought about by the god (who will turn everything toward a good end, we should add).

First we will have a look at "tragic" motifs in *Rudens* in detail.

The shipwreck is a typical tragic motif (Marx 1928, pp. 83–84). As Questa (1997, pp. 43–44) has shown, we have here a structural parallel to the beginning of Euripides's *Helen*, in the shipwreck and the supplication for help, but above all to his *Andromeda*, in the wording and the situation. The two landing scenes, first of the two girls, later of the two villains, are staged in an antithetic mood and style. Palaestra's long aria and Ampelisca's short entrance-song have an earnest, quasi-tragic tone, while Plautus presents the landing of Labrax and his companion in an extremely comic scene in spoken verse.

In a remarkable scene the priestess Ptolemeratia (for whose tragic profile see Sharrock 2009, p. 213), receives the poor girls in her dwelling-place, the temple of Venus. This scene again consists of a *canticum*, mainly a duet of the priestess and Palaestra. Ptolemeratia in her song uses paratragic wording, such as 268–69: *nempe equo ligneo per vias caerulas / estis vectae?* ("Presumably on wooden steed have ye traversed the cerulean paths?").

After some mainly comic scenes, for instance the witty encounter of the uncharitable slave Sceparnio and Ampelisca, there are two series of (tragic) supplication scenes (*hikesiai*; see Sharrock 2009, pp. 215–216): the two girls seeking shelter from the pimp, first in the temple, then at the altar on stage. These scenes with the girls (mostly silent) at the altar, the threats of the ruthless pimp, and their rescue by Daemones and the young lover cover nearly one third of the whole play (442–56, 559–570, 615–891). Embedded in these scenes, Daemones' dream (593–610) relates his confrontation with an ape (= the pimp Labrax) who threatens two swallows in their nest (i.e., the two girls, compared to the daughters of Pandion). Dreams are a motif of tragedy (Aesch. *Cho.* 32–41; Eur. *IT* 42 ff. etc.; cf. Marx 1928, p. 139 and especially Raffaelli 2009, pp. 193–212), and a similar dream in *Mercator* (225–271) suggests that Plautus sought to appropriate and reconfigure a tragic topos.

The whole second part of *Rudens* consists of scenes of lively comedy, especially the fight of Daemones' slave Gripus, who has "fished" the chest with Palaestra's *crepundia* (recognition-signs) out of the sea, against Plesidippus's slave Trachalio, and the arbitration-scene, which leads finally toward the recognition between Palaestra and her father Daemones.

Especially paratragic is the language of two songs. The *canticum* of Palaestra (185–219) and the following scene with Ampelisca (220–258), both sung in a tragic register, have been brilliantly treated by Bianco (2007). We will cite the beginning of Palaestra's song in order to show its tragic style and its paratragic references. The text opens with a generalization, a technique comparable to that applied in Alcmena's song (*Amph.* 633–636). This opening provides an excellent overture to the girl's hopeless situation (text: Questa 1995):

- 185 *Nimio hominum fortunae minus miserae memorantur
quam in usu experiendo is datur acerbum.
<satī> hoc deo complacitum est me hoc ornatu ornatam
in incertas regiones timidam eiectam?
hancine ego ad rem natam miseram me memorabo?*
- 190 *hancine ego partem capio ob pietatem praecipuam?
nam hoc mi haud laborist laborem hunc potiri,
si erga parentis aut deos me impiavi;
sed id si parate curavi ut caverem,
tum hoc mi indecore, inique, immodeste*
- 195 *datis, di: nam quid habebunt sibi signi impii posthac,
si ad hunc modum est innoxiiis honor apud vos?*

The fortunes of humans are claimed to be less pitiful than the bitterness given them in experience and practice. Has it so pleased the god that I, dressed in this outfit and terrified, have been tossed overboard into unknown regions? Will I claim that I, pitiful, was born for *this*? Do I receive *this* reward for my outstanding *pietas*? Well, receiving this suffering is no suffering to me, if I've behaved impiously toward my parents or the gods; but if I've diligently taken care to beware this, then, o gods, you give me this unbecomingly, unfairly, unjustly. For what signs will the impious bear hereafter, if in this measure grace is given to the innocent in your sight?

The whole passage is given in a complex variety of meters, a sign of heightened emotion. With its insistence on Palaestra's *pietas* (piety, devotion), it echoes the prologue's announcement (9–15) that the gods help the good and punish the bad. Strong alliteration underlines the girl's misery (189 ~ 197a ~ 216). The *canticum* deploys plenty of figures of speech to show the intensity of the girl's emotion: anaphora in 189–190 (*hancine*), polyptoton (191; cf. 205), *figura etymologica* (187), alliteration, homoeoteleuton (later in 215); such figures are the most evident signal of paratragic style. To give just one further example: toward the end of the song, the untranslatably dense tricolon in 215, *algor, error, pavor me omnia tenent* (“icy cold, wandering lost, terror all grip me”) has been persuasively explicated by Bianco (2007, p. 160): *algor* is a remarkable term not found again before Sallust; *error*, which in *Amphitruo* is used for the confusion inflicted on the human characters, has a tragic ring to it; and *pavor* is at home in the languages of epic and tragedy (cf. Enn. *Alcum.* 17 Joc.: *tum pavor sapientiam omnem mi exanimato expectorat*, “sheer horror takes away from my terrified mind all cleverness”). Bianco (2007) has also shown that the “paratragic mood” of Palaestra has to be seen in the light of famous heroes and heroines of tragedy. Just as Palaestra does, Antigone in Sophocles's play refers to her terrible fate: despite her piety toward the gods she is in a hopeless situation. Bianco shows many other parallels in Greek and Roman tragedies, detecting a notable cluster of analogies for Palaestra's situation as a *relicta*, a forsaken woman, as is the mythic Ariadne (174–187). Bianco even speaks of a “paratragic puzzle” and assumes that these “riddles” could be solved by the Roman audience (cf. Sharrock 2009, pp. 211–212).

To sum up: there may be some reason to call *Rudens* a tragicomedy, but the play lacks really tragic action and characters comparable to the presentation of these elements in *Amphitruo* and *Captivi*. On the other hand, there is a high percentage of

tragic motifs and the play is rich in paratragic language, as Bianco (2007, pp. 149–220) has shown. Therefore, it seems preferable to classify *Rudens* as a comedy with tragicomic scenes and paratragic passages.

Summary

In this essay I have used Aristotelian categories for the interpretation of three Plautine plays, all of which could be characterized by the term “tragicomedy.” The categories of plot, characters, and language do not apply equally to these plays. While all three apply to *Amphitruo*, in *Captivi*, despite its tragic substance, language is rarely tragic, while in *Rudens* paratragic songs give a tragic flair to what remains, basically, a comedy. Paratragedy, on the other hand, emerges in isolated passages rather than pervading whole Plautine plays. Its function is to give tragic flair to extraordinary scenes, especially songs, sometimes in a witty and sometimes in a more earnest mood. Paratragedy is concerned more with the theatrical effects than with the deeper thematic levels of a comedy.

NOTES

- 1 I would like to thank Peter McC. Brown, Boris Dunsch, and Keith Maclennan for substantial help. Likewise I am very much obliged to the editors of this volume for their precious suggestions and their translations of Plautus.
- 2 Tragicomedy as a genre is a creation of modern times; for its development and aims, see Seidensticker (1982, pp. 24–38). In its ideal form, it would at the same time be tragic and nonetheless raise hilarious laughter by its comic elements. Some scenes in *Amphitruo* and *Captivi* come close to this definition. See also Foster (2004, pp. 9–34).

FURTHER READING

For a rather different approach to Plautus and tragicomedy, see Gunderson (2015). For *Amphitruo*, Manuwald (1999) is solid. For *Captivi*, the commentary by Lindsay (1900) remains useful.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Language of Plautus

Peter Barrios-Lech

Introduction

In our exploration of the language of Plautus, I should first make clear my assumptions and define some terms. I use the phrases “the language of Plautus” or “Plautine language” as a shorthand for the language contained in the 21 extant plays. For without any fully extant plays from other authors, we cannot know what is truly “Plautine” about the language. This “Plautine language” so defined shows stylistic and linguistic unity with the language of other *palliata* authors (Wright 1974; Karakasis 2005). When I say “Plautus,” I mean the author of the plays as we have them, although Marshall (2006, pp. 245–279) has argued that the plays themselves may result not from the hand of a single author, but from a collaborative effort among author and actors, and as a culmination of multiple (re-) performances.

Just as the southern and central dialects of English became standard in England when Shakespeare was writing, during Plautus’s active period, Latin – the Italic dialect spoken in the plain of Latium – had begun to achieve status as a standard language throughout Italy. Latin was the language that elites preferred for a variety of functions: administration of government, codification of laws, and a cultural expression – including plays, poetry, and historiography – that would put Latin-speaking Italy on par with the Greek-speaking Eastern Mediterranean (Clackson and Horrocks 2007, pp. 78–80; Feeney 2016, p. 200). Plautus’s Latin is one manifestation of this cultural activity – his plays were, after all, produced during games funded by the Roman state. (For a different view, of Plautus’s plays playing to a diverse audience emphasizing or prioritizing the poor and slave, see Richlin 2017). Taken as a whole, Plautus’s language represents a stage in the language’s evolution termed “Early Latin” that occurred prior to Latin’s codification, which itself was achieved

through the activity of grammarians and the formation of a canon. It therefore shows greater variety on various levels, including morphology, syntax, and pronunciation (Redard 1956; Weiss 2009).

But Plautus's language does not simply convey the Early Latin in use by his contemporaries in the late third and early second centuries BCE. It is an amalgam, a stage language consisting of Early Latin, Archaic, and moribund features; the registers are various, as Plautus introduces legal, military, medical, and religious language. He imitates high-literary genres like epic and tragedy, and throughout, the speech of the plays is differentiated by gender (Adams 1984; Dutsch 2008), character type (*senex*, *adulescens*, *servus*, *matrona*, *meretrix*, *ancilla*; see Maltby 1995; Schauwecker 2002; Barrios-Lech 2016), and even, at times, by individual character (Arnott 1972; Stockert 1982).

In order to appreciate what is distinctive about Plautus's language in the most direct manner possible, we will compare three passages, considering first stylistic features – that is, features typical of the author on the level of rhetoric, imagery, plotting, and characterization. We then briefly review linguistic features of Plautine language. Wherever possible, we will attempt to show how the features identified serve Plautus's artistic purposes, subjective though it may be for us now to divine what those are.

A Comparison of Three Passages: Menander's *Fabula Incerta* 8 (Arnott), Plautus's *Curculio*, and Turpilus's *Epiclerus*

We shall scrutinize three scenes roughly comparable in character, situation, and metrical setting. Each passage contains a young man in love conversing with his slave; in each scene, it is night or early dawn. Similar, too, are the musical and metrical settings: none of the passages has musical accompaniment; all are in the iambic trimeter or its Roman equivalent, the senarius. The reader is encouraged to note differences as he or she works through each passage.

Passage from Fabula Incerta 8 (Arnott)

This passage, while it may not be from the hand of Menander (342/1-292/1 BCE), captures nevertheless some of traits of his comedy (Arnott 2000, p. 563). It is dawn. A young man paces in front of the door of the young woman's house. He is in love with her. His slave listens in:

NEANIAΣ]δ[
οἷκαδε κα[τα]γ[α]γών σ[ω]ς, ἐὰν ἐτο[ι]μ □ –
ἔλθῃς ἀπ[αν]τών αὐτός· οὕτω γὰρ κ[αλῶς]
φαίνοντα φανὸν πό[θ]εν ἂν ἀγοράσειέ [τις];
ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΟΣ (??) ὑπαδολέσχης ἐστί.
NEANAS διαφέρει δέ μ[οι]
ὁ κῶμος οὐδέν· πᾶσαν ὥραν γάρ—μέσ[ων]
νυκτῶν, ἔωθεν, ἐσπέρας—ἀποκλείομαι.
προσκατερῶ δὲ καὶ πορεύομ' ἐπιμ[ελῶς].

ἐρῶ γὰρ ὁ ταλαίπωρος ἀνθρώπων ἐ[γώ
 καινότα[τ]α πάντων, [ο]ὐχ ἑορακὼς πώποτε 10
 τὴν ὄψιν [ῆ]ς ἐρῶ, μὰ τοὺς δώδεκα θε[ο]ύς.
 ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΟΣ (??) πῶς οὖν ἐρᾷς, ὦ τρισκακόδαιμον; τ[ί]νι τρόπῳ;
 ΝΕΑΝΙΑΣ πολλοῖς ἀπίθανον φαίνεται εἶναι τ[οὔτ'] ἴσως.
 ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΟΣ (??) κ]ινητιᾷν τε καὶ τρυφᾷν λίαν δοκ[εῖς].
 ΝΕΑΝΑΣ φ]ῆς ἄτοπον. ἰκετεύω σε, πυθό[μενον] σαφῶς 15
 ἀ]στεῖον ἦθος, ἡδέως σχεῖν· δ.υ[
 εἴ]ρηκ[α] τὴν ὄψιν γὰρ εἶναι μήπο[τε]
]εις ὥστ' ἐκπεπλήχθαι κ[
]τῷ κοσμίᾳν δεῖν.[19
 [Gap of 20, 40, or 60 lines; lines here are numbered sequentially]
 ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΟΣ (??) ἄ δὴ λογίζου. [πα]ραδέδωχ' ὁ τυφ[λός] Ἔρως 20
 τὸ λαμπαδεῖον τοῦ πόθου γὰρ σοὶ λ[αθών].
 ΝΕΑΝΙΑΣ ὦ ληστὰ.
 ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΟΣ (??) σαυτὸν οὐ καθέξεις, ἄθλ[ις];
 ὥς σοὶ κέχρηται, νῦν ἀκμὴν χρήτα[ι] πάλιν.
 σὺ γὰρ παρέδωκας σαυτόν, ἐμβρόν[τη]τε σύ. 24

Young Man. Coming home safe, if, when read[y...
 you come yourself (*looks towards the east, at the rising sun*)
 From where could [anyone] buy a light that shines so bright?
Slave. He's kind of rambling... 5
Young Man. Night revels don't matter
 At all to me, since at every hour – the middle of the night,
 Dawn, evening – I'm shut out.
 But I am persistent and I come assiduously.
 For I – wretch of men – am in love in the most novel
 Of ways, since I've never seen the face of her I love, 10
 I swear it, by all the twelve gods!
Slave. Then how are you in love, you sorry thing? I[n what way?
Young Man. To many t[his perhaps] seems incredible.
Slave. To me you seem too licentious and wanton.
Young Man. You're wrong. I'm begging you to be nice, 15
 Since you know well her refined character.
 Now I've said that her face was ne[ver...
 So as to be amazed...she, well behaved...¹ 19
 [Gap of 20, 40, or 60 lines]
Slave. What you're thinking. Eros, without your noticing,
 handed over to you the torch of desire. 20
Young Man. You thug!
Slave. You check yourself, you sorry wretch!
 As Eros used you, so, right now, does he treat you [again]
 After all, you surrendered yourself to him, you crazy fool! 24

Passage from Plautus's *Curculio* (1–12, Leo's edition)

Palinurus stops Phaedromus (a young man) in his tracks. The latter wears fancy clothes, and is accompanied by a slave carrying a wine jug:

- PAL. *Quo ted hoc noctis dicam proficisci foras
Cum istoc ornatu cumque hac pompa, Phaedrome?*
- PHAED. *Quo Venus Cupidoque imperat, suadet Amor:
si media nox est sive est prima vespera,
si status conductus cum hoste intercedit dies, 5
tamen est eundum quo imperant ingratiis.*
- PAL. *At tandem, tandem*
- PHAED. *Tandem es odiosus mihi.*
- PAL. *Istuc quidem nec bellum est nec memorabile:
tute tibi puer es, lautus lucas cereum.*
- PHAED. *Egon apicularum congestum opera non feram, 10
ex dulci oriundum melculo dulci meo?*
- PAL. *Nam quo te dicam ego ire?*
- PAL. *(haughtily)* Where am I to say you're setting forth at this time of night, with what you're wearing, and with this retinue, Phaedromus?
- PHAED. *(melodramatically)* Where Venus and Cupid command me, where Love urges. Whether it's midnight, or whether the first hours of evening, Whether the date for my trial has been agreed upon with opposing counsel 5 Doesn't matter: I've got to go where they command, though against my will.
- PAL. *(sententiously)* But in the end *(stops himself; regains composure)*...but in the end...
- PHAED. *(rapidly)* But in the end, you're being a pain.
- PAL. *(jocular tone)* This is neither fine nor memorable! You're your own slave! ELEGANT THOUGH YOU ARE, HOLDING THE CANDLE, YOU LIGHT YOUR OWN WAY.
- PHAED. *Me not carry it (points to candle), formed by the work of little bees, 10
Originating from sweet little honey, for my sweet darling?*
- PAL. *(impatiently)* Where am I to say you are going?

Passage from Turpilius's Epiclerus (50–53, p. 106 R³)

A young man (*adulescens*) converses with his slave, Stephanio. In accordance with Attic law, the young man's parents forced him to marry a young woman left the sole heir of her family property (Scafuro 1997, pp. 282–305). Turpilius probably adapted this play, now lost, from Menander's *Ἐπίκληρος*, which also exists only in scattered quotations (Ribbeck 1898, p. 106).

- STEPH. *Quaeso edepol, quo ante lucem te subito rapis,
ere, cum uno puero?*
- PHAED. *Nequeo esse intus, Stephanio.*
- STEPH. *Quid ita?*
- PHAED. *Ut solent, me curae somno segregant
Forasque noctis excitant silentio.*
- STEPH. *Please, good god, where are you heading so quickly,
Master, with just one slave?*
- PHAED. *I can't be inside, Stephanio.*

STEPH. Why is that?

PHAED. As usual, my worries keep me from sleep and send me outside in the dead of the night.

Let us now compare the passages first on the level of stylistics, as defined above, then on the linguistic level.

Comparison of Rhetorical and Stylistic Features

Plautus immediately pulls us into the present moment, focusing on its physical detail. Turpilius, however, trains our attention on the dramatic situation by highlighting a problem, the explaining of which was probably the underlying subject of a now-lost expository passage. Menander, with characteristic economy, conveys the stock character of the young man in love and his ironizing slave, while introducing the innovative dramatic situation: the young man desires the girl for her character, not for her physical appearance, for he has not yet laid eyes on her.

Plautus uses deictic – that is, “pointing” – pronouns to focus attention on costumes and props. The slave singles out the young man’s elegant dress with the deictic second-person pronoun *istoc* (“that outfit of yours,” *istoc ornatu*, 2); *hac*, a form of the deictic first-person pronoun, brings our attention to the slave escort carrying the wine jug, approaching Palinurus, the slave-speaker (“with this retinue here” cum ... *hac pompa*, 2). Plautus’s language emphasizes physicality and confirms a more crowded stage.

Turpilius does not focus our attention on physical detail. Rather, he highlights the unusual situation, and elicits the question, why is the young man leaving home at night with *just one* slave? (“Please, good god, tell me, where you’re rushing off to with just one slave as an escort, master,” *quaeso edepol, quo ante lucem te subito rapis, / ere, cum uno puero*, 1–2.)

In the scene from Menander, we are directed almost immediately to the characterizations and affective states of the figures on stage. A young man paces before his girlfriend’s closed door as dawn breaks. The dawning sun inspires the young man, who, in a poetic flight of fancy, compares the light of a torch with the beauty of the shining sun (Arnott 2000, p. 567 n. 1): “Where could anyone buy a torch that shines as beautifully as this one does?” *Fab. Inc* 8. 3–4). The enthused young man’s awkward attempt at poetry gets undercut in a sardonic aside by his slave: “he’s rambling on,” 5). With his usual economy, the poet sketches the characters. They appear to be stock roles: the young man in love of exaggerated emotions and the bemused slave.

Differences also emerge in the way that the poet conveys love’s impact on the young lover. Turpilius employs the vague “worries” (“worries keep me from sleep,” 52), thus arousing the audience’s interest: what exactly is bothering the young man? Terence, who like Turpilius betrays a well-known fondness for Menander (Suerbaum 2002, pp. 258–259; Karakasis 2005, pp. 150–168), shows similar phrasing. With Turpilius’s *Epiclerus* 52 we may compare Terence’s *Andria* 260, spoken by an *adulescens amans*, who, like his Turpilian counterpart, is forced to marry: “so many worries entangle me, which pull my mind in different directions.” Possibly both authors are keeping close to the phrasing of the Menandrian original in their respective lines.

The Greek New Comic poet conveys the power of love with imagery traditional in Greek poetry: Eros – desire – holds a torch; Eros is blind. The slave says, “blind Eros went unnoticed and handed over to you / the torch of desire,” 20–21). The young man reproaches the slave (ὦ ληστᾶ, “you thug,” 22). But, undaunted, the slave continues to upbraid his master: Can his young charge not control himself? (22). Eros mistreated the young man before, and he mistreats him now (23). The young man has surrendered himself to love, fool that he is (24). In these lines, we find the recurrent image in Greek love lyric of a young man completely subject to Desire. The military image, of “surrender,” is conveyed in a single word (παρέδωκας, 24).

The young man of *Fabula Incerta* 8 surrendered to Ἔρως, desire: he appears to have had a choice. But the Plautine young man does not. For the trio of Venus, Cupid, and Amor command (*imperant*) him to go to the girl’s house against his will (*ingratiis*, 6). The verb *imperant* is repeated three lines later, in ring-form, announcing to the reader the conclusion of a current thought and transition to a new one. This is a feature familiar to Homerists, and special to oral poetry in general (Blänsdorf 1967, pp. 30–35; 75–76), but such repetitions can also be a sign of Plautine insertions (Fraenkel 2007, pp. 79–81). The trio mentioned – Venus, Cupid, and Amor – were probably the Latin poet’s original expansion on the Greek model, which may simply have mentioned Ἔρως, as our *Fabula Incerta* does (so Fraenkel 2007, p. 281, followed by Haffter 1934, p. 109 nn. 1–2; but cf. Hes. *Th.* 201 for a parallel).

Plautus also might have expanded on the military imagery only subtly hinted at in his original. Recall that Menander in *Fab. Inc.* 8 conveyed, in a single word, the image of surrendering to an enemy (παρέδωκας, 24). The Plautine lines identified as an insertion contain a parody of a Roman legal formula, *status conductus cum hoste ... dies*, a formula naming the day on which adversaries are bound to appear in court. Gellius refers to it when quoting a soldier’s *ius iurandum* (oath) to appear at muster on the day specified by the consul (NA 16.4.4.8). The soldier could cite as an exception that the muster falls on the day when he is due to make a court appearance (*status conductusue dies cum hoste*). The joke, then, is thoroughly Roman: while a soldier can take the above-mentioned legal exception to avoid heeding the consul’s muster, the young man cannot use the same exception when heeding a different *imperator* on the field – Venus herself! The insertion, then, introduces parodies of military and legal language, both hallmarks of what has been recognized as Plautine style (Fraenkel 2007, pp. 159–165); it also comically highlights the absolute control Love has on the young man.

Such expansions are typical of the poet. His has often been called a “padded style” (Palmer 1954, pp. 86, 89; Blänsdorf 1967, pp. 3–4; Fraenkel 2007, p. 280). Consider as an example the first line of *Curculio*: “Where am I to say you are setting forth at this time of night?” (*quo ted hoc noctis dicam proficisci foras*). This stands in stark contrast to the simpler alternative in Turpilius, “where, good god, are you rushing before dawn?” (*quaeso edepol, quo ante lucem te subito rapis*, 50). Padded phrases like the one cited are stylistically elevated, typically appearing in musically accompanied verse and beginnings of speeches, whether musically accompanied or not. The particular purpose here is to arouse laughter, in this case, at bathetically pompous speech incongruously put into the mouth of a low-status character (on the stylistic distinction between accompanied and unaccompanied verses, cf. Haffter 1934, esp. pp. 108–110 for this passage).

We cannot tell much about Turpilius's characterization of the *adulescens amans* from the few lines quoted. But Menander introduces a novel twist in the characterization of the young lover in *Fabula Incerta* 8, for he loves "in a very novel way" (καινότη[τ]α, 10); namely, he has not yet seen the beloved. Rather, the young man's desire arises from a consideration of the woman's "refined character" (ἀ]στεῖον ἦθος, 16) and upbringing ("well-behaved," κοσμίαν, 19). The audience probably appreciated the innovation: this is not a lover who conceives an immediate physical passion for the love-object, like so many other young men in comedy. Instead Menander confronts them with a variation of the type and asks us to re-evaluate the quality of the ἔρωϛ experienced by the youth.

Laughter, however, comprises the main goal of Plautus's opening lines, not innovative characterizations. Menander, in *Fabula Incerta* 8, conveys humor with a light touch. Teasing remarks are conveyed in half-lines (5, 22, 24). His audience smiles knowingly at the young man's overwrought emotions (4; 6–11). Plautus, following his own aesthetic sense, uses marked language to convey humor in bolder, broader strokes. That is, he employs various registers of language (on which, see 15.3) in an unexpected context, by having a slave character adapt a high register for an otherwise routine expression, or by inserting military and legal language in a young man's declaration of love.

The Menandrian pedagogue had chastised the young man for this love affair ("You check yourself, you sorry wretch! / As Eros used you, so, right now, does he treat you [again]," 23–24, but Plautus defies our expectations: the slave's protests about the love affair degenerate into a silly repetition of *tandem*, "in the end" ("But in the end ... but in the end ...: But in the end, you're being a pain," 7). This delight in language for its own sake, and in its possibilities for giving aural pleasures, has been said to be typical of Plautus (Fraenkel 2007, p. 280). We find another typical Plautine piece of humor in these lines as well: the puzzling statement or equation of the type *anguillast: elabitur*, "he's an eel: he slips away" (*Pseudolus* 747; see Fraenkel 2007, pp. 17–44). At line 8 of the *Curculio*, we hear a general criticism ("that action of yours is neither fine nor worthy of memory"). Then, the specification of this general criticism is presented as a riddling equation ("you are your own slave"). The solution finally comes – "you're lighting your own way with a candle" – highlighted with "magnificent alliteration" (*tute tibi puer es, lautus lucas cereum*, 9; see Fraenkel 2007, pp. 280–281 for the sophisticated riddle structure of the passage).

Menander moves the plot forward swiftly. By line 11 in the Greek play, we discover the situation: the young man has fallen in love, though he has not yet seen the object of his love (9–11)! By the eleventh line of Plautus's passage, however, we have moved precisely nowhere in terms of plot, and the playwright shows no interest here in individualizing the stock-character type; he prefers instead to delight his audience with the kind of joking and banter I described above.

To sum up: if Menander's (and Turpilius's) plays handle plot with economy, Plautus prefers to delay plot movement; if Menander delineates a psychologically coherent persona, Plautus willingly sacrifices character integrity for the sake of a joke ... and then another ... and another The phrase "verbal fireworks" has been used before to describe this effect. We are dazzled by one display, and have not long to wait before the sky lights up again.

Noteworthy Linguistic Features

So much for the comparison focusing on language as a medium to convey character and plot, and to move the audience to laughter or tears (or both). Let us focus on the Early Latin features of the Plautus passage that might seem strange to a student trained in Classical Latin. For more exhaustive treatments, readers are encouraged to consult the introductions to the language of Roman Comedy in de Melo (2011a, lxix–lxxxv; 2011b) or Karakasis (2014, 2019). As a kind of prolegomenon to using de Melo’s and Karakasis’s introductions, and for the reader to follow the subsequent discussion with greater ease, I offer the following brief preview of terms and methodologies.

By **register** I mean language routinely associated with a particular situation or context. Thus, “high register,” the language characteristic of a literature like tragedy and epic, which aims to represent characters of elite status; “low-register” language, by contrast, is typically found in comedy and other such literary forms and represents the language of the non-elite. By **colloquial** I mean the language we presume to have been used in everyday talk by Romans contemporary with Plautus. **Archaic** usually refers to elements of the language that were no longer current in Plautus’s day. These can be isolated by their infrequent occurrence in Plautus, position at line-end or at caesurae, as is the case for the medio-passive infinitive in *-ier* (for instance, *utier* instead of the form *uti* familiar to us from Classical Latin; see Leumann 1977, pp. 581–582), and forms of subjunctive of *esse* in the first, second, and third persons singular (*siam*, *sies*, *siet*) and the third person plural (*sient*) (Meiser 1998, p. 201; Clackson and Horrocks 2007, p. 98). **Early Latin** (EL) refers to literary or colloquial language that was current and in use when Plautus wrote but had largely disappeared by the time Cicero was active, the period of **Classical Latin** (CL) (Suerbaum 2002, pp. 1, 3). The typical procedure in identifying an element belonging to EL is to consider its use from Plautus’s time down to the period of Silver Latin in the empire. If a feature drops out after roughly 80 BCE, it is conventionally considered an EL element. This identification is further confirmed if the presumed EL feature turns up in later authors known to cultivate the Early Latin idiom, specifically the second-century CE authors Fronto, tutor of rhetoric to Marcus Aurelius, and Aulus Gellius, compiler of a congeries of anecdotes, the *Noctes Atticae*. If a feature appears in Plautus and Terence and again surfaces in CL, where it confines itself to texts preserving a semblance of the spoken language (Cicero’s letters, or Horace’s *Satires*), or in authors of technical treatises, the language of which is not, generally speaking, high-register, we may view it as an element of the *sermo cotidianus*, the “everyday talk” of the Romans.

Here is a sample of five EL features prominent in Plautus:

1. **“Etymological Figures”** (*figurae etymologicae*), where both verb and its complement contain the same root, e.g. *facinus facere*, “to do the deed” (*Poen.* 308).
2. **Repetition of Key Phrases and Words.** These often serve to open and conclude a section of an argument and mark divisions in the progress of a narrative or argument (Blänsdorf 1967, pp. 75–76). For example, a parasite’s monologue repeatedly cites food as the “ties that bind” in *Menaechmi*: “[the person] whom you wish to bind properly, so that he does not escape,” *quem tu adservare recte ne aufugiat voles* (87) [...] “you will bind him easily as long as you bind him with this [kind of] bond,” *facile adservabis, dum eo vincolo vincies* (93).

3. **Short Rhythmical Cola**, sometimes with pairs or triples of alliterative or assonant synonyms: “do this **loyally**; be **loyal**; don’t use **loyalty** lightly,” *fac fidele; sis fidelis; cave fidem fluxam geras* (*Capt.* 439).
4. **Assonance and Alliteration Generally**, “as you yearn in your business ventures,” *ut vos in vestris voltis mercimoniis* (*Amph.* 1).
5. **Topic-Comment Structures** such as “the driver – he’s really friendly.” For example, *tu istos captivos duos / heri quos emi de praeda de quaestoribus, / is indito catenas singularias istas* (“you, those two P.O.W.s I bought yesterday from the spoils from the quaestors – you put these here separate shackles on them.” *Capt.* 110–113). Such structures, drawing their syntax from the spoken language and appropriate when the language’s “writing tradition” is still nascent, are frequent in Cato’s prose and in Plautus; they largely disappear from Classical Latin.

Let’s return to the opening of *Curculio* for some other specific examples. The first- and second-person accusative and ablative pronouns *med* and *ted* are archaic (*ted* is the play’s second word). These appear rarely in Plautus, and then only before vowels or *h*+vowels (Leumann 1977, p. 462). Belonging to EL, however, is the adverb *ingratiis* (6), “against one’s will,” which appears with some frequency only in Plautus and Terence; it then appears in two early speeches of Cicero, from 71 (*pro Tullio*) and 70 (*Verr.*), and to delight the archaizing Fronto, who uses it twice in his letters. Similarly exclusive to the EL period is the time marker we find in the opening line of *Curculio*, “this time of night,” *hoc noctis*, which appears only in Plautus and then again in the archaizers Apuleius and Fronto. Livy, sensitive to features of EL, once uses the phrase in a passage to give it archaic coloring (40.9.12, in a speech by Perseus, the future King of Macedon, with a dramatic date of 179 BCE). Some of the second-person deictic pronouns with deictic suffix *-c(e)* characterize Latin of the Early period. Specifically, we find the ablative *istoc* (cum *istoc ornatu*, 2) only in EL and imitators of the Early Latin style (esp. Aulus Gellius; Meiser 1998, p. 162). One usage that continued into the classical period was the emphatic *tute* (9) for *tu*, found both in EL and CL colloquial Latin sources (Hofmann and Szantyr 1965, p. 174).

The hypotheticals in lines four to five are a feature of the so-called padded style, a manifestation of one of the “Early Latin” habits of mind, inclined as it was to cover all the options (“if it’s midnight, or if the first hours of evening, / if the date for my trial has been agreed upon with opposing counsel”). The specific form these lines take, that of several premises preceding a conclusion, is inspired by legal and religious language found frequently in Plautus (Blänsdorf 1967, pp. 16–17; Clackson and Horrocks 2007, p. 107). We may compare, for instance, the language of the *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus*, forbidding large secret gatherings of worshippers (“that they not wish after this point to conspire, move conjointly, make pacts together; make promises together,” *neue posthac inter sed conioura[se neu]e comuouise neue conspondise neue compromesise uelet*, 18–19); and Cato’s suggested prayer for the purification of a grove has a similar character (“if you are a god, or goddess; if I or someone else, at my bidding, shall have acted,” *si deus, si dea es, sive ego sive quis iussu meo fecerit*, *De agr.* 139).

Turning to Turpilius, who wrote more than a century after Plautus, the language shows elements closer to quotidian usage of Classical Latin; the passage quoted above retains only two EL features. The phrases for “before daybreak” (*ante lucem*), “please” (*quaeso*;

lit. “I beg”), and *rapere* with a reflexive pronoun meaning “hasten” are all unmarked stylistically and formed part of spoken usage in CL.² The appearance of the verb *segregare* with an ablative of separation (in this instance, *somno*), is unusual and unparalleled in the EL corpus, where *segregare*, “to separate from,” typically appears with an *a/ab*+personal pronoun. Perhaps the construction was a low-register one in CL and beyond, since it appears later in Petronius and the technical treatise of Columella.³ But two EL features still situate the passage in our period. After the early period, *nequeo*, for *non possum* (“I am not able”) appears in Classical Latin only as a poeticism or in a deliberately archaizing author like Sallust or Lucretius. *Edepol* (“by Pollux!”) also formed part of the spoken idiom in the Early Latin period but became obsolete in the spoken language afterward (Adams 1984, pp. 51–52). In sum, in Turpilius’s lines we see a language in transition, very much closer to CL norms than that of Plautus.

Together, these two passages show a language in constant transition. Plautus’s language shows colloquial features, while retaining archaic elements as metrical conveniences (like the *ted* in *quo ted hoc noctis*, 1), or to give a character’s speech added *gravitas*. To give one example of the latter from a different Plautine play, genitives in *-um* (CL *-orum*), only retained for naming weights and measures, can be deployed to mark the elevated register of a passage, like the battle description in Plautus’s *Amphitruo*: “the soldier strikes with steel, javelins shatter; the sky resounds with the cry of men,” *ferro ferit, tela frangunt, boat / caelum fremitu virum* (232–233) (Fraenkel 2007, pp. 236–237; Gerschner 2002, pp. 77–80; cf. Chapter 20, pp. 303–309). Plautus employs the rhetorical figures specific to EL to convey humor, as he does in the young man’s descriptions of Venus, Cupid, and Amor, but the Latin poet can also employ those same resources to more serious effect (e.g. the prayer at *Poenulus* 1187–1190, with Clackson and Horrocks 2007, p. 107, including a helpful list of rhetorical figures specific to EL).

Sociolects

As one might expect, Plautine language shows differentiation of characters by social group or civic status, what we call sociolects. Regarding differentiation by social group, Maltby (1995, pp. 33–34), for instance, shows how low-status characters – cooks, slaves, soldiers – employ Greek words, on average, more often than high-status characters. This statistic may reflect the long tours of duty of soldiers in Southern Italy, where Greek was spoken, as well as the presence of Greek slaves and professionals (poets, cooks, artists) at Rome during the time of Plautus. Other distinctions between low- and high-status speech in Plautus remain less well studied. There are probably more features in the plays, such as *heus* (“hey!”; “yo!”), which low-status characters employ significantly more often than do high-status characters. When high-status speakers utter *heus*, they usually address it to low-status characters (Barrios-Lech 2016, p. 165). Donatus offers some evidence for the idea that *vitiosae locutiones* – grammatically incorrect utterances – are confined to the speech of low-status characters, but confirmation from systematic study has been hard to find (e.g. the use of future imperative for commands requiring immediate fulfillment, Barrios-Lech 2017, pp. 501–502). As for differentiation of language by character-types, tricky slaves and courtesans employ imperatives much more often on average than do their counterparts, the good slaves and matrons (Schauwecker 2002; Barrios-Lech 2016).

In general, feminine speech in Roman comedy is markedly more polite than that of men (Adams 1984, p. 65; cf. Barrios-Lech 2016, p. 49); it is more other-oriented, seeking to forge and maintain intimate connections with the addressee through language. We can see how Plautus distinguishes male from female speech in even the smallest phrases, as women swear, request, and emote differently from men. Generally, men utter direct, unmodified imperatives (*fac!*, “do [it]!”) more often than women. Both genders soften their imperatives, but females do so three times more often than males (Barrios-Lech 2016, p. 49). Men use “negative politeness” softeners, like *nisi molestum est* (“if it isn’t a bother”), features that display respect and maintain some emotional distance (Barrios-Lech 2016, p. 54). Women, by contrast, employ “positively polite” (that is “other-oriented”) markers, like the softener *amabo* (“I will love you” = “please”). Compared to men, women are much more inclined to utter phrases like *mi homo/mea mulier* (“my dear man/woman”), that is *mi/mea*+vocative. While women prefer *mi*+vocative when the possessive indicates a familial or other kind of bond (*my* father; *my* friend), they are *even more* inclined than men to employ the expression when it conveys mere intimacy (“*my dear man*”; Dutsch 2008, pp. 53–55).

Regarding gendered swearing, Aulus Gellius observed that men swear by *hercle* and women by (*m*)*ecastor*; statistical analysis has confirmed this observation and noted a preference in women for the oath *pol* (Adams 1984, p. 51). Men, however, utter the related compound *edepol* twice as often. Additionally, men utter all but one of the examples of *hercle* in Plautus, with the exception put in the mouth of an assertive *meretrix* (*Cist.* 52; see Stockert 2004, pp. 363–366; Barrios-Lech 2016, p. 50). It is more accurate, then, to speak of a masculine style of swearing that can be co-opted also by female stock character types, including the more independent courtesan.

While both genders use interjections to express a variety of emotions like fear, pain, and indignation, *ei*, a particle expressing all the emotions just listed, is uttered by men only (Richter 1873, pp. 463–469). Similarly, men exclusively utter *va(h)*, a particle expressing a variety of emotions, from indignation and amazement to something like English “aha!” when something suddenly comes to mind (Richter 1873, pp. 636–641). Men also exclusively employ *ehen* – expressive of grief (Dutsch 2008, p. 102) – while both genders employ the shortened form *heu*. There is only one female-exclusive interjection, *au* – a particle expressing more or less pained surprise – attested once in the speech of a maid (*St.* 259; cf. Richter 1873, pp. 415–420; Dutsch 2008, p. 103; Terence uses the interjection 10 times, 7 times by maids). Emotional responses, however, are the province of women, with references to female weeping appearing at a significantly higher incidence than references to male tears (Dutsch 2008, p. 97). Similarly female in character are expressions of self-pity couched in the accusative of exclamation, such as *me miseram* (“woe is me!” Dutsch 2008, p. 109). We can conclude that “male characters weep less often,” express self-pity less often, and prefer to express themselves in conventional interjections (Dutsch 2008, p. 147).

With these linguistic norms, Plautus can have men employ “feminine speech,” and conversely women “masculine speech,” to certain effect. Shrewish wives, for instance, have a particularly masculine style of speech, altogether suited to the imperious roles they play in their marriages; and young men are markedly more polite than other male characters in Plautus. After all, the young men in love are typically portrayed as passive, at the mercy of a smarter and more entrepreneurial tricky slave (Adams 1984, p. 56; Barrios-Lech 2016, pp. 43, 48).

A chapter on Plautus's language cannot end without a discussion on insults and jokes about sex. Let us begin with the latter topic. A little later in *Curculio*, Palinurus parodies the role of the wise counselor to the young man in love, a role apparently played "straight" by the pedagogue of *Fabula Incerta* 8. Palinurus advises the youth to "love with your witnesses present," *quod amas amato testibus praesentibus* (31). But *testes* can also mean "testicles." That is about as explicit as Plautus will get. The poet exhibits a restraint typical of the genre in his references to sex, preferring to use double entendres (*Curc.* 33–38, esp. 35–36; 56), euphemisms, and vague language (*Aul.* 637; the imperative *pone*, "put," comically construed as the preposition "behind").⁴ By contrast, Atellan farce admitted primary obscenities, for instance, *verpa* ("prick," Pompon. 129 Frasinetti), "tip of the penis" (Pompon. 68R³), *nates* and *pyges* ("buttocks," Pompon. 67R³, cf. 76, 97; Novius 19R³), and "bugger" (Pompon. 148–49R³). Atellan farce also included frank references to excretion and urination (e.g. *cacare*, "to shit," Pompon. 97; Nov. 6R³; *commictilis*, "pissed on," Pompon. 138R³). Some evidence suggests that *togata* (comedy in native Roman dress) was also less restrained in this regard, where we find the primary obscenity *culus* ("ass") and direct reference to urination (Titinius, *Varus* 137; see Adams 1982, p. 248).

To understand Plautus's handling of insults, comparison with Terence will be useful. A little later in the *Curculio*, Palinurus, the slave we met earlier, reciprocates an insult of the young man's beloved, calling her "a drunk, insignificant homunculus, utter frippery" (*ebriola persolla, nugae*, 192). Such insults typically indicate some moral or physical failing on the part of the addressee and are usually uttered in "*une explosion d'affectivité*," an outbreak of strong emotion (Miniconi 1958, p. 166); they also provide another source of humor and evidence of Plautus's verbal creativity. As the insult from *Curculio* well illustrates, Plautus, in general, showcases a more colorful and picturesque vocabulary of insult than does Terence (Lilja 1965, p. 82). The earlier playwright's insult vocabulary contains a richer and more imaginative variety of words denoting animals than that of Terence, where we find only three (*asinus*, *canis*, and the generic *belua*: donkey, dog, and beast). The same is true for Plautus's use of insults denoting objects (e.g. *caenum*, *frutex*, *sepulchrum*; shit, blockhead, tomb = old man); compare Terence, who uses only *lapis* (stone; Miniconi 1958, p. 163). Nor does Terence use compounds to create terms of insult, as Plautus does. In Plautus, we find compounds like *trifurcifer* (triple-scoundrel), with *tri-*prefixed to an insult found both in Plautus and Terence; *flagritriba* ("one who wears down a whip," from Gr. τριβω, "wear down"); expansions of *dicere* and *loqui* (*falsidicus*, *multiloquus*; fib-speaker, big-talker); and more (*bustirapus*, *sociofraudus*; tomb-robber, comrade-cheater; Miniconi 1958, p. 170). "Pile-ups" of insults are found more often in Plautus (e.g. *Men.* 133; *Most.* 40–41), than in Terence (Miniconi 1958, p. 174; Lilja 1965, pp. 82–83, who lists only two such passages.). In Plautus, too, we find colorful insults referring to torture; and we find entire scenes constructed around slanging exchange of insults (e.g. *Asin.* 297–307); we find no true parallels in Terence (Miniconi 1958, pp. 173–174; Lilja 1965, p. 82; Fraenkel 2007, p. 13).

Plautine language is first and foremost a sophisticated artifact of dramatic literature, but the same language can also be read as a literary transcript of spoken Latin. As such, it offers glimpses of diverse registers and strategies speakers of Early Latin deployed to navigate daily life.

NOTES

- 1 Translations here and throughout are mine; I have consulted the relevant Loeb editions of de Melo in making them.
- 2 *Ante lucem*, most likely neutral, appears six times in Plautus. Cicero's usage indicates its predominantly colloquial nature: 20 times in the letters, 5 in the speeches, and 4 in the philosophical and rhetorical works. *Te rapis* appears in a passage of Horace's *Satires*, which preserve a colloquial idiom, in a rapid repartee between Horace and his slave, Davus (2.7.116–118), and we find *se rapuit* at Ov. *Am.* 3.5.29.
- 3 Petron. *Satyr.* 135.5.3: *servio ego imperio granaque sordidissimis putaminibus vestita curiosa manu segrego*, "I obey and heed her, and carefully separate the beans from the dirty shells" (Encolpius speaking); Colum. 6.5.1.9: *atque ita segregandi sanis morbidis*. In EL, *segrego* appears once (Plaut. *Mostell.* 1050, with *ex*).
- 4 On Plautus's use of euphemisms (e.g. *corrumpo*, "corrupt"), sexual metaphors (e.g. *cucumis*, "cucumber," and *aro*, "I plow"), see Adams (1982, p. 219); on his sexual double entendres, see Fontaine (2010, pp. 201–247).

FURTHER READING

For colloquial language in Plautus, see Hofmann (1951) or its Italian translation, with added introduction and updated bibliography (1985). For more on sociolects in Plautus, see Adams (2013). Though dated, Lindsay (1907) remains useful on Plautine syntax. Bain (1979) compares a fragment from Menander's *Dis Exapaton* and the Plautine translation of it.

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Metatheater and Improvisation in Plautus

Christopher Bungard

Rome or Greece? The plays of Plautus perpetually step foot in both worlds. Plautus opens his *Truculentus* by explicitly reminding the audience of the need to rethink everyday Rome as a temporarily Greek space – “Plautus petitions you for the puniest parcel of land from your wondrous and wonderful walls, in which he might assemble without architects Athens” (1–3). While his characters are ostensibly Greek, often with overblown Greek names (e.g. Pyrgopolynices – “Conqueror of Many Towers”), they betray a Roman underbelly with overtly Roman references (cf. Chapter 19). Within this turbulent world, Plautus encourages his audience to contemplate the constructed nature of identity as people play on the roles they are expected by society to play, succeeding most the more they are willing to improvise when events obstruct their desires.

Theater in Rome in the third and second centuries BCE was a heady mix of local Italian farces, the so-called *Atellanae* originating in the Oscan town of Atella, as well as Greek comedy, whether through actors’ guilds from Southern Italy (the *techmitai Dionysou*) or written collections of Athenian drama (Gentili 1979, pp. 15–62). We have here a push and pull between the improvised Italian and the scripted Greek traditions. In the former, we have a comic spirit driven by the potentials of the moment, where a general framework sets up parameters within which any of a multitude of potentials plays out. In the latter, we have comedy driven by the plot, where spectators are more interested in how the characters get from point A to point B. These two are not mutually exclusive, as Vogt-Spira (1998) discusses, especially as the comic action of improvisation can feed upon the potentials available within the teleological aims of scripted comedy. By deploying aspects of either tradition, Plautus challenges his audience to think more deeply about the nature of social performance, which is, in fact, highly theatrical, whether the audience knows it or not.

Metatheater: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Embrace Theatricality in the Real World

Scholars have long grappled with how to assess the overt theatrical nods by Plautus in his plays. Clearly something interesting is going on with these, but scholars use metatheater in such broad and varying ways that it runs the risk of including, as Rosenmeyer has objected, “everything whereby playwrights lay bare their awareness of their own formal and conceptual devising and whereby dramatic composition or performance refers back to itself” (2002, p. 94). Given that Plautus did not craft his comedies *ex novo* but rather adapted them from Athenian New Comedy, it should not be surprising that his comedies are full of moments of theatrical self-awareness. Ultimately, I would argue that the usefulness of this concept, then, rests entirely in its ability to help modern readers and viewers appreciate Plautus’s claims on the theatricality of life outside the theater by highlighting an awareness of the theatricality of the plays themselves.

Before turning to this ultimate point, though, it is helpful to understand ways that the concept has been used by scholars to appreciate Plautus’s technique in crafting his plays. For Gentili (1979), metatheater is primarily a marker of plays constructed from other plays. This understanding of metatheater helps Gentili notice the tendency by writers of *palliatae* to place much more emphasis in speeches on the visual elements that are latent in the Greek original, a technique that the ancient critic Gellius aligned with mime. Looking at a comparison between Caecilius’s *Plocium* and the original by Menander cited in Gellius, Gentili further notes, “The mimetic features of the action are further accentuated by the transposition of Menander’s spoken passage into song” (1979, p. 53), a technique that Gentili sees more generally across the corpus of *palliatae* playwrights.

The works of Barchiesi (1970) and his followers continue the inward theatrical focus, emphasizing the importance of the “play within a play” as a marker of Plautus’s unique theatrical stamp. Slater (2000) extends Barchiesi’s sense of metatheater to focus on theatrically self-conscious theater. The hero of Slaterian metatheater is the clever slave who acts as a playwright within the play (e.g. Epidicus, Chrysalus, and most of all Pseudolus), carefully orchestrating plots to unite lovers and assigning roles for their coconspirators to play. Within this context, the famed poet soliloquy from *Pseudolus* (394–405) takes on special significance as Pseudolus struggles to figure out where to find the money he needs, pledging to become like a poet who “looks for what is nowhere, finds it nevertheless, makes a lie similar to the truth” (402–403). For Slater, theater has the power to create a reality, and those who are aware that they are in a play and can play the playwright may harness that power to their advantage. Ultimately, Slater urges a strong linkage between Pseudolus and Plautus, seeing the play as fundamentally about the Plautus’s playmaking technique. He argues that “Plautine theatre is not mimetic in conception – it is metatheatrical. Plautus does not imitate life but a previous text” (2000, p. 118). Again and again, Slater orients the focus of metatheater on the theater itself, privileging the world of writing and scripting.

Subsequent scholars of Plautine metatheater have expanded on Slater’s emphasis on metatheater as primarily a tool for thinking about the creation of theater for theater’s sake. Pseudolus demonstrates a particularly robust knowledge of the theatrical expectations for

the slave role. As one example of this, noted by Moore, Pseudolus deploys all the monologue types of *servi callidi* in Plautus (Moore 1998, p. 94). His theatrical self-awareness, combined with his claim on the role of poet/playwright, leads Sharrock (1996, p. 186) to claim, "Things exist because Pseudolus creates them, and the audience is privileged to view the ramifications of his power even when he is not present." Looking to the *servus callidus* in Plautus more broadly, Sharrock asserts, "The playwright is the god of his fictive world" (132) and "The playwright has to be a slave, then, precisely because he is in some sense 'really' a god" (Sharrock 2009, pp. 132, 133). As in Slater, metatheater in Sharrock remains a tool for exploring the process of creating comedy. The theatrically self-aware slave playwright stands for the playwright proper, and the audience eagerly devours the play of endless role transformations in order to deceive the dupes within the play, just as we in the audience agree to being tricked into believing the actor playing Pseudolus really is Pseudolus.

While metatheater for Frangoulidis is still primarily about the process of creating theater, he differs from other approaches by treating "comic characters as 'independent' figures who 'grow' as poets in parallel with or in contrast to the play's poet" (Frangoulidis 1997, p. 3). The key for Frangoulidis is the relationship between the plots of playwrights within the play and that of Plautus, who stands outside of the play, especially as the give and take between the two levels helps us to a better understanding of Plautine poetics. Frangoulidis looks to Tranio in *Mostellaria* as a particularly illustrative example of this. Throughout the play, Tranio is tasked with diverting the older master Theopropides away from the endless partying that the son Philolaches has enjoyed in his father's three-year absence. At each moment that Tranio might succeed in prolonging the Greek life of indulging bodily appetites (*pergraeacari*), another character inadvertently undoes the scheme. A plot to keep the old man out of the house is ruined by a moneylender, and a slave of Philolaches's son curtails the subsequent plot about buying the neighbor's house. While the audience may enjoy the bold lies of Tranio as he continually rewrites the script that steers events away from the very Greek life that this slave advocates, Frangoulidis argues that this kind of playwriting must be tempered. At the end of the play, Plautus presents a comic ideology that blends the values of Greece and Rome, one "devoid of the unattractive excess that is associated with either one of the distinct cultural value systems" (23). The emphasis in Frangoulidis is still mostly inward-focused on the competition between comic ideologies, but it opens up a bridge to more recent discussions of metatheater, which have begun to shift to the importance of Plautine techniques for life off the stage.

While the approaches outlined above may help us appreciate Plautine theater for its importance to theater history, more recent approaches have emphasized the ability of Plautus to speak to the theatricality of life itself. Going back to Abel's (1963) original book on metatheater, Batstone (2005) reminds us that for Abel this concept is not primarily about the theater itself, but rather a sense that the world beyond the theater is also a stage, or to put it in Batstone's words (2005, p. 29), "it means rather that the metatheatrical sensibility is absolutely certain that life is a performance, that it is all an act, a competition for the symbols of our world and an improvisation of images." Batstone turns to the Plautine rewrite of Menander's *Dis Exapaton* to demonstrate Plautus's interest in externalizing the contradictions that the Menandrian characters suppress. In Menander's version, the young lover Sostratos believes that his friend Moschos has betrayed him with the

hetaira he loves. He delivers a monologue in which he suppresses anger toward his friend to fix his rage on solely on the woman, vowing to give money back to his father as a way to spite her. The Plautine version opens with Mnesilochus (=Sostratos) unsure whether his friend or the *meretrix* Bacchis is to blame (500–502), and from this develops a farcical tirade in which the young lover vacillates between his desire for vengeance on the woman and his desire for her (e.g. “I’ll get my revenge on her in so many ways. I’ll drive her all the way to the point that – my father’s broke!” 507a–508). Menander’s young lover *is* angry with his friend, but he hides that anger in order to preserve the friendship. Plautus turns the earnestness of Menander into farce to expose Mnesilochus’s thinking as a performance that shelters his friendship from his anger. However he may proceed, he will sacrifice one genuine feeling for another: he will put on the show that he believes is right for the moment.

By turning metatheater away from theater interested in theater itself to a recognition of the theatricality of life itself, we can appreciate in Plautus an awareness that, as Gonçalves (2015, p. 13) notes, “language forms, transforms, and performs the world.” Hence Plautus’s great interest in the role of role-playing throughout the corpus. The Plautine theater is awash with characters donning new roles in the hopes of convincing others they are who they say they are (e.g. Pseudolus pretending to be Ballio’s slave; Curculio pretending to be the soldier’s messenger; Philocomasium pretending to be her nonexistent twin sister; etc.), which leads Gunderson (2015, p. 120) to note, “Within the plays, then, we find nothing but playing. And, conversely, we find a great wariness on the part of characters: maybe the person opposite me is just play-acting.” The most successful Plautine characters are the ones that are most attuned to this dichotomy, able and willing to don new roles as the situation develops while being able to recognize when others are seeking to do the same. This is what enables the slave Milphio in *Poenulus* to recognize the act in his master’s flattering words while drawing attention to the fact that on other days this same master doles out whippings (see Bungard 2012 on Milphio’s self-awareness of his role). In contrast, the inability to approach the world in a metatheatrical way locks characters into the roles that are written for them, as if they could be nothing more.¹ As I have noted elsewhere (Bungard 2014), the young lover in *Pseudolus* embraces the opportunity to be seen simply as an *adulescens amans* – “it’s no fun if a lover doesn’t play the fool” (237), but in so doing, he willingly accepts the limitations of the role. He often gets fixated on a single idea in overly alliterative lines (e.g. *lepidis litteris lepidis tabellis lepida conscriptis manu*, 28), incapable of working through his problem in a productive way. He locks himself into the role of the *amans*, and as a result, he is completely dependent on the assistance of his *servus callidus*.

Improvisation: Or, the Give and Take of the World

Before delving into the role of improvisation in Plautine plays themselves, we need to keep in mind that, as Marshall (2006, p. 265) argues, “improvisation is not a theatrical genre but is a means of producing a dramatic text.” Presumably any kind of theater can be created through improvisation, and the improvisatory technique, as opposed to scripted theater, will have dramatic impacts on the nature of a given theater piece within its own generic sphere.

It is also crucial to remind ourselves briefly about the nature of the theatrical scene in Rome that Plautus inherited. As Vogt-Spira (1995; 1998) points out, scholars of Plautus have typically focused on the connection between Roman comedy and Athenian New Comedy with nods to the local Italian, improvised traditions (e.g. mime, *Atellanae*, etc.). Livy (7.2) notes the introduction in Rome of theatrical entertainment (*ludi scaenici*) in 364 BCE when other attempts to appease the wrath of the gods and lift a pestilence had failed (see Chapter 1, p. 18). As Vogt-Spira observes, Livy places heavy emphasis on improvised forms of theater that preceded the written and continued to thrive past the arrival of the first Latin playwright, Livius Andronicus, and his written adaptations from Greek models. Rather than focusing on the written Greek models, we should, as Vogt-Spira encourages us, recognize that it is the local improvised tradition into which the *pal-liatae* inserted themselves. Thus, the Plautine audience would have been much more familiar with the expectations of improvised theater than the highly scripted kind of theater that is the norm in the Greek originals.

It is best to think about the relationship between improvisatory and scripted theater as a continuum, as Marshall (2006, p. 252) has suggested. A purely improvised theater would mean that the theater is actually being performed at the exact moment of composition – with no framework established before the actors begin their work. A purely scripted theater would have the actor perform the text established beforehand by the playwright with no modifications whatsoever; a difficult task, as anyone who has performed in a play knows. Looking to ancient drama, we can situate various traditions along this scale. Toward the improvisatory end, we would situate the *Atellanae*. Taking *commedia dell'arte* as an analogue, we would see a form that is not purely improvisatory, given the standard scenarios, routines (*lazzi*), and stock characters that performers use to create their pieces, but at the same time, within that basic framework, there is great flexibility for the performers to explore whatever potentials they can. Toward the scripted end, we would situate Athenian New Comedy. Here, the poet carefully scripts the action to unfold. Goldberg (1995, p. 35) has observed that “Menandrian comedy in particular not just poses and solves a specific problem, but offers its audience the pleasure of watching (or reading) an action develop in the certainty that ... the end will be consistent with the beginning.” Given how much plot drives Menandrian comedy, it becomes difficult to imagine much room for improvisation within that tradition. Plautus situates his comedy somewhere between these two traditions, and scholars have continued to debate the role of actual improvisation in Plautine performances.

Vogt-Spira's work spurs scholars to recognize that it is the improvised tradition, not the written tradition, that provides the theatrical basis for Plautus preparing plays for performance in Rome. Hence, we find in Plautus many features that are typical of improvised traditions, especially the *par pari respondere*, in which one character seeks to reframe the meaning of another's words in a verbal contest. We can find examples of this in the ancient world through Greek bucolics and fescennine verses and in the modern world in Italian *stornelli* (Vogt-Spira 1998, p. 117).

Nevertheless, for Vogt-Spira Plautus is not fundamentally interested in creating improvised theater. Rather, it is the backdrop against which he introduces a more scripted kind of drama. Hence, we also find several instances (e.g. *Poen.* 550–554, *Pers.* 465–466, *Curc.* 512) where Plautine plotters carefully rehearse their coconspirators in the words

that they should use. Here we should also note the emphatic presence of Plautus in the prologues, where he asserts his stamp on the scripted Greek drama he has brought over to Rome (see Introduction, on *Trinummus*). For Vogt-Spira, these moments suggest that Plautus begins to assert the superiority of his more scripted *palliatae* over the improvisatory traditions against which his plays had to compete.

For Slater, the literary *imitation* of improvisation provided Plautus with an opportunity to invigorate the limitations of the scripted dramas he found in the Greek tradition. Here we must distinguish between actors and characters. Rather than improvisation as a method for producing the text of the play itself, Slater envisions a world in which the playwright crafts a script, but in a way that makes the characters *appear* to improvise. This would provide a certain kind of realism precisely because daily speech is seldom as polished and perfect as what we find in the carefully chosen words of the Greek tradition. In this kind of drama, Slater (1993, p. 117; Slater 2000, p.167) notes, "An important part of the viewer's pleasure is the impression that the actors as well as their characters are in competition with each and thereby test their skills in improvisation." These characters have been tossed into a situation and need to find their way out of it. Pseudolus must find new ways to get the money he needs to free his master's beloved. Chrysalus must undo the foolishness of his young master in giving back the money out of spite. Epidicus must resolve the fickleness of his master's desire, figuring out how to clear the way for a new girl when he has already procured the one that he was told to procure. These are not plotters with a script easily laid out before them like a road map to success. Instead, they will improvise schemes as the situations demand. When unexpected obstacles to the plots arise or events take a turn away from the usual trajectory in *palliatae*, the audience can enjoy the progression precisely because the improvisatory notes suggest that events may not unfold as the plotters wish them to.

In contrast to Slater and his emphasis on *literary imitation of improvisation*, scholars such as Marshall have asserted that the Plautine actors actually improvised in their performances. Marshall envisions a creative process in which Plautus did not fully script the plays before the actual performance, possibly providing the actors with only the scripts of their own parts. Within such an environment, the audience could well tolerate substantial variability between performances while still recognizing the performances as being the same play (2006, p. 259). Here we might draw on jazz as a useful analogue, where the melody is clearly stated between performances, but it is not the only, nor perhaps the most crucial, component of the audience's enjoyment of different performances by the same artist.² Those attending the performances of *Stichus* over its three-day run may have seen performances of varying lengths depending on factors such as weather and audience reaction, but they would also identify each of those varied performances as *Stichus*.

As proof of the likelihood of actual improvisation in the performance of Plautine plays, Marshall draws on three particular facets, two textual and one logistical. It is crucial here to make a distinction between a script and a transcript. The former exists before the performance, while the latter seeks to capture the actual words of the performance. For Marshall (2006) and Goldberg (2004), the texts that we have of Plautus are best thought of as transcripts, and the existence of textual doublets (e.g. *Asin.* 249–253, *Cist.* 125, 130–133 and 190–193, *Pseud.* 1136–1139, etc.) suggests performance variations that may have emerged from actors discovering different ways to play a scene through

improvisations. Marshall allows for the possibility that there may be other explanations for why these doublets occur, such as printing errors, but he ultimately finds such other possibilities less convincing. Similarly, what Marshall refers to as “elastic gags” provide space for an actor to draw out a scene or contract as the performance situation demands (Marshall 2006, p. 272). Vogt-Spira argues that such gags as in *Mercator* 120–188, where the slave Acanthio slowly reveals his useful information, do not slow down the action, “since nothing is actually being delayed; rather, the progress of the action is temporarily unimportant” (Vogt-Spira 2001, p. 101). Here, an actor may judge how much the audience is enjoying the routine. If they are laughing at the bits, he could add some more to the physical ailments that Acanthio complains about in his mad dash to warn his master. If it is clear that the audience has had enough, he could cut out some of the lines preserved in the text to reengage the action of the plot.

Finally, Marshall argues for the likelihood of improvisation in Plautine performance from the logistical concerns of the performances themselves. The actors who performed the *palliatae* were not like the actors who performed Athenian New Comedy. Though the performances happened at civic-religious festivals, as they did in Athens, the plays were not performed by citizen actors. The Plautine troupe faced competition with other entertainments (e.g. tightrope walkers, dancing bears, gladiators, etc., if we follow the prologue of Terence’s *Hecyra*) for funding from the magistrates, and it would have been in their interest to keep the costs of productions to a minimum. Based on careful analysis of Plautus’s plays, Marshall deduces that the Plautine troupe at a minimum would have been composed of four to nine speaking actors and a *tibicen*, with six speaking actors as the most common needed size (Marshall 2006, pp. 109–114), and there is every reason to believe that a troupe making a living by performing would keep the number of mouths to feed at a minimum, especially since some of the actors were surely slaves. If troupes received contracts for performance with less than three weeks of pre-production time (Marshall 2006, p. 273), the notion that the actors received full scripts copied by scribes begins to make less sense. Time taken by a scribe copying texts means less time for the actors to work out the production kinks, find the potentials in any given scenario, and work it up to a level ready for professional performance. Given a performance environment in which there were definitely other improvised theatrical traditions that were popular with the audience (e.g. mime, which long outlasted the active production of *palliatae*), it is hard to imagine that a troupe would fully shun the creative potentials of improvisation, especially when there are elements of improvisation that might enable a show to come together on relatively short notice.

I would like to highlight an important second side to Slater’s approach to improvisation, especially given the problems posed by limited sources for evaluating how much Plautine actors really improvised or simply appeared to. Drawing on Greenblatt (1980), Slater (1993) reminds us that improvisation is a social phenomenon as well. For Greenblatt, the extent to which a society inclines toward improvisation is tied to the extent to which it has developed the “mobile sensibility,” i.e. the ability to step outside oneself and inhabit another person’s space in order to think as they think. While Greenblatt focuses on the Spanish conquistadors, this mobile sensibility is almost second nature to marginal peoples who must become bilingual when the dominant people do not have to. Slaves and women must filter their worldview through the dominant narrative of male masters or risk being destroyed by these

dominant people as a threat to the order that makes them dominant. Slaves, people who by definition are not autonomous, but rather are to act as extensions of their master's will, according to the logic of slavery, are primed to consider worldviews beyond their experience. As a result, it makes sense that in Plautus the characters most able to exhibit the mobile sensibility are the various *servi callidi* who can facilitate their masters' desires while simultaneously criticizing the foolishness of these masters.³ In *Poenulus*, the slave Milphio hears his master calling him to play the part of the *servus callidus* (131–132), and yet he can stand back and scold the master for the pain that the master's love causes him in the form of beatings, even suggesting that they should swap roles so that Milphio could beat his master because of love and be pardoned (142–144). Similarly, Pseudolus is eager to be invited to play the role of the *servus callidus* in the opening scene of the play, but he makes a mockery of the letter that spells doom for his young master's love (21–30). Where the master can only see “loveliness” (25–26: *lepidis litteris lepidis tabellis lepida conscriptis manu*), Pseudolus sees procreating letters, prophetic scribbling, and chicken scratches. He can recognize the foolishness of his master while simultaneously working to unite lovers.

Regardless of whether the actors in Plautus's theater improvised, there can be no doubt that the characters within the plays certainly do. Marshall suggests that “characters ‘improvise’ within the plays because the performative milieu of the Roman republic expected actors to improvise, not only in mime and *fabulae Atellanae*, but in *fabulae palliatae* as well” (Marshall 2006, p. 262). When improvisation is expected in the world of the drama, it can be deployed by a playwright as a viable alternative to scripting, and I believe there is an interesting and shifting tension between the power of scripting and improvisation over the course of Plautus's career. In the interest of exploring the contrast here, I would like to focus on two plays at either end of Plautus's career, *Miles Gloriosus* and *Pseudolus*. Although the dating of Plautine plays is notoriously tricky (see Buck 1940; de Lorenzi 1952), most attempts place *Miles Gloriosus* early in Plautus's career, and we do know that *Pseudolus* was performed at the inauguration of the Temple of the Magna Mater in 191 BCE. In both plays, the slave must bamboozle an opponent who possesses the object of his master's desire, but the process of developing the scheme and bringing it to a successful conclusion values scripting or improvisation very differently.

In *Miles*, scripted plotting appears on prominent display. At the conclusion of the famous mime scene (200–230), in which the collaborating old neighbor narrates the visual appearance of the clever slave Palaestrio concocting his scheme against the soldier's slave, Palaestrio lays out the twin-strategy in which the beloved Philocomasium will pretend to be her twin sister who has taken up lodging at the neighbor's with her lover (237–245). When the old man agrees that he will tell the same story to the soldier, Palaestrio carefully scripts exactly how he wants the scheme to be played (246–248):

But say that they're very similar,
and Philocomasium must be instructed about this so she knows,
so she doesn't falter if the soldier asks her.

In the scripted mode of plotting, just like in theatrical performances closer to the scripted end of the spectrum, rehearsal is key. Palaestrio has a precise way that he wants this scheme played, and he wants his actors to know their parts well.

For Palaestrio, the scripted mode provides a more surefire way to accomplish the scheme, and in fact, in this play, he is right to think so. In an aside, he refers to Philocomasium's performance as the twin sister as "Palaestrio's dream" (385). Slowly but surely, the soldier's slave accepts the performance as genuine, he buys into the dream, and he opts to spend the rest of the play in hiding, hoping to avoid a beating for all the trouble he sees brewing around him.

The scheme against the soldier provides a more interesting look at the tension between the scripted and improvised modes in this early work of Plautus, a reflection on, I believe, the competing spirits of the traditions Plautus drew on to make his drama. As Palaestrio, the young lover, and the old man turn their attention to duping the soldier, Palaestrio asks the old man if he might be able to scrounge up a prostitute to play the role of the old man's wife, and he seeks to script this role and its performance. He describes in detail how the woman should wear her hair so as to appear matronly, and he insists that the old man instruct her to do so (791–793). Now that he has the look right, Palaestrio is ready to explain the precise action that will make up the plot, i.e. the prostitute will pretend to be the old man's wife, but desperately in love with the soldier. Palaestrio and the prostitute's maid will act as go-betweens for the affair using a ring as a token of love. He needs the young lover to remember that they have called the twin sister Dicea, but Palaestrio will tell him his precise role later. At this point, he simply needs the young lover to play his part carefully (811). As we observed in the opening deception, the plan is carefully scripted, here down to the level of the visual details. Palaestrio has worked out his plot in advance, and he wants his actors to play their parts precisely.

When the women arrive on stage, the old man is busy rehearsing the actors so they can carefully perform the plot that Palaestrio has detailed above, but the lead prostitute, Acroteleutium, pushes back against his overbearing direction, revealing her interest in a less scripted kind of theater. Acroteleutium insists that she has fully memorized her part (882–884) – no need for more rehearsal from him. Palaestrio is eager to carefully rehearse the key points of the plot (905–913: pretend to be the old man's wife; crazy about the soldier; given a ring as a token of her affection). Acroteleutium's short affirmations slowly grow into a profession of Palaestrio's prophetic ability, since she will enact the future he imagines (911). So far, the scripted mode has dominated the performance, and Acroteleutium is willing to follow the plans carefully laid out by the plot's architect. She has been given a script, and she promises her due diligence in performing that script well.

At the same time, we need to think about the nature of this script. While there has been a great emphasis on careful rehearsals so all the actors may play their parts to perfection, Palaestrio has not crafted the precise way to play the scene. He has given his actors key moments in the plot, but very few precise lines. Because Palaestrio has not fully scripted the deception, the maid Milphidippa must pull him aside midway through the opening salvo against the soldier to ask for more direction (1025–1027). We may see in this moment an insistence on the importance of the scripted mode, but Palaestrio concludes his quick directions with an assertion that some improvisation will be necessary. As he says, "Take care of the rest, think it over, hunt for it from my words" (1029: *tu cetera cura et contempla et de meis venator verbis*). While careful plotting may be at the fore here in Plautus's early play, the characters still must figure out how best to work toward the successful conclusion of the plot. They will need to read the reactions of the soldier in

order to figure out the right words to best convince him of the reality of a neighbor's wife, desperate to leave him for the soldier. Indeed, the female characters best embrace the improvisatory mode, taking their cues from those around them. In contrast to Pleusicles, who fails to play his sailor role convincingly, the women are a veritable storehouse of improvisation.

Where *Miles* emphasizes rehearsing the scheme, a marker of the scripted mode, *Pseudolus* showcases a continually improvised scheme. Anyone who has read the play has to wrestle with the fact that Pseudolus is a terrible plotter if we simply evaluate him on his ability to come up with a scheme and bring it to conclusion. He proclaims himself a poet (401–405) who can find the needed money, but he abandons whatever scheme he may have kept in his mind when the older master arrives on the scene. His next scheme is abandoned when a messenger arrives from the soldier who plans to buy the young man's love (601–602). When Pseudolus fails to get money from the messenger, he again formulates a new plan to make use of the letter he has been entrusted with, and it is this scheme that finally succeeds. This is not a slave who can announce a plan, organize a cast to perform it, and convince the target of the reality of his plan.

While Pseudolus may talk to other characters as if he has a plan in mind (e.g. all of his bluster in the scene with old master and his friend where he insists that the old man will provide the money), Pseudolus is at his best when he commits to the improvisatory mode of plotting. Perhaps there is no greater revelation of this commitment than the very moment when this clever slave speaks to the audience immediately after the old man departs. As he says in that moment, when one plan has failed and another needs development (562–568):

*suspicio est mi nunc vos suspicari,
me idcirco haec tanta facinora promittere,
quo vos oblectem, hanc fabulam dum transigam,
neque sim facturum quod facturum dixeram.
non demutabo. atque etiam certum, quod sciam,
quo id sim facturum pacto nihil etiam scio,
nisi quia futurumst.*

It's my suspicion that you now suspect that I am promising these great deeds so as to entice you while I act out this play. You suspect that I may not do what I said I would. I will not budge, and I still know for sure that I still have no clue how I might do this, except it is just going to happen.

I want to draw attention to the way that lines 566–567 develop the thought in Latin. Pseudolus opens with a statement of fixity (*non demutabo*) and reinforces that confidence while not actually revealing anything to the audience (*certum*). But this is all a joke on the audience, since he actually has no clue how he will get the money (*nihil etiam scio*). For a plotter in the scripting mode, this would be a disastrous state to find oneself in, but for a plotter of the improvisatory mode, there is confidence that something will happen, a new opportunity will arise, and a new plot will be found to help the young master (*nisi quia futurumst*). One does not need to have it all planned out in advance. Instead, one can take cues from the performance, borrowing on the strength of improvised theater in its need to read the situation in order to figure out how best to play it.

Improvisation, Scripting, and the Theater of Life

Through the tension between the scripted and improvised modes, Plautus reveals something about the theatrical nature of life itself. As Batstone (2005, p. 44) eloquently puts it, “we are always an act, always a project, always a plot or a claim on the world of others,” and this is just as true of the Roman time as it is of later generations. For the Roman historian Livy, it makes sense to envision Scipio Africanus, hero of the Second Punic War, acting like a character from the Roman stage. Scipio, eager to bring the war against Carthage onto African soil, improvises and scripts a new role for some of his centurions during the campaign to take Utica. While his envoys meet with the enemy commander in the enemy camp, these centurions are disguised as camp-slaves, scouting out the arrangement of the enemy camp so as to best plan a surprise attack. Frontinus in his *Strategems* (1.2.1, likely drawing from Livy) recounts a similar version, adding that the disguised men loosed a horse in the camp so they could have an excuse to rove the whole camp. Polybius, the most contemporary historian to the actual events, thinks the meeting a ruse so that Scipio could better prepare an attack (14.2.5–14; Polybius mentions Scipio’s spies at 14.3.7 but not their dressing as slaves during the negotiations). Imagining the great general conspiring like a *servus callidus* might run counter to expectations of the control patricians sought to exert over the world, a kind of scripting through speech acts. We might compare the carefully orchestrated masked funeral processions, which offered up plenty of paratheatrical material for the onlookers who could read into these “scripted” events a claim about what it meant to be a Roman patrician. Perhaps the key driver for whether one asserts a claim on the world in ways more aligned to scripted theater versus improvisation is power. Those in social positions of power can simply announce their claims and believe others will follow, whereas those in inferior positions must improvise in response to the scripts in which they are called to play a part. Regardless of the type of plotting, the examples above suggest the usefulness of extending metatheater beyond the Roman stage.

There is value to both the improvised and scripted modes. We make a claim on the world around us, and we hope, whether rightly or wrongly, that others will agree to play to our scripts. We anticipate that others will act in certain ways based on our expectations that there is a script of sorts that has developed through their collective past actions, and yet, we know that we may need to improvise when others do not play to the scripts that we had expected them to or hoped they would. Plautus makes a strong claim on the theatrical nature of life itself as we navigate between scripts, both for ourselves and others, and moments that defy the script, requiring us to think on our feet and improvise a new way forward.

NOTES

- 1 As Questa and Raffaelli show, masks could be a kind of shortcut for playwrights (Questa and Raffaelli 1984, p. 36). Writing in the second century CE, Pollux’s *Onomasticon* (IV.133–154) catalogs over 80 different kinds of stock mask types. Presumably a theatergoer could quickly identify the expectations of a character based on the mask the character wears. This does not mean that Plautus viewed his masks in completely prescriptive ways, as Milphio’s reluctance to play the part of the *servus callidus* has indicated.

- 2 We might also embrace here the possibility that certain parts of a Plautine drama might allow for easier improvisation. Again, the jazz analogy proves helpful. Most jazz improvisation happens over a steady time signature, and it is easier to imagine that passages in a single meter (e.g., trochaic septenarius) would require much less skill on the part of the improviser compared to the metrical fireworks of Plautine mixed *cantica*. That said, the sub-genre of Free Jazz, where even the time signature may be spontaneously improvised, suggests that improvisation could still be possible in the metrically more complicated *cantica*.
- 3 One might see linguistic code-switching as a manifestation of the mobile sensibility. As Adams (2003, pp. 350–356) discusses, such code-switching could be a means of adjusting speech to better fit the needs or expectations of the addressee. In Plautus, it is predominantly slaves who switch into Greek (the young man Calidorus in *Pseudolus* 700 being a notable exception). Through this code-switching, Plautus can indicate to his audience that the linguistic identities of the slaves may be at odds with those of the masters.

FURTHER READING

For improvisation in Plautine drama, Benz, Stark, and Vogt-Spira (1995) is a valuable volume, and Benz therein outlines the improvisatory Italian traditions that influenced Plautine drama. Barsby (1995) sees improvisatory nods in Plautus as hearkening back to a time of genuine improvisation, and Zagagi (1995) sees such moments as primarily raising the comic level. Petrides (2014) usefully summarizes the tensions between scripted and improvised elements in Plautus. For metatheater in Plautus, Sander-Pieper (2007) and Christenson (2014) examine how characters use their sense of the audience's presence to build rapport. Safran (2015) helps students in the classroom think about metatheater as dramatic critique. For metatheater beyond Plautus, see Thumiger (2009) for ancient and modern theater and Moodie (2009) for Terence.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Music and Meter in Plautus

T.H.M. Gellar-Goad

Imagine that you want to study the music of Lin Manuel Miranda's popular musical *Hamilton*. But you don't have a score or a recording. All you have is the libretto (Miranda and McCarter 2016), along with some contextual information: a cast list, some descriptions of the kinds of instruments used in American musicals, a few photos of productions of British musical farces from the Victorian period, and a few newspaper clippings that make passing reference to some aspect of *Hamilton* as a cultural phenomenon.

This same challenge faces us in a chapter on Music in Plautus and would similarly face us in a chapter on Music in Terence, in Menander, in Euripides, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, and so on. Greek and Roman theater is best comparable not to modern drama, which can be well-understood with a basic script text, but rather to modern musicals, with a combination of spoken word, sung passages, soloist set-pieces, and choral songs. The Greeks and Romans did not use sheet music, nor modern Western musical notation. Most musical works from the ancient world survive with only text devoid of annotation, with no or little indication of melodies. Notable exceptions include the Tomb of Seikilos (Martin 1953) and some musical papyri, including a couple of choral passages of Euripides (e.g. Bélis 2001; Pöhlmann and West 2001, pp. 10–21). For the extant plays of Plautus, the text (mostly) survives. Cast lists can be reconstructed, and references to performance contexts can be found here and there in later authors. Information can be brought to bear from the Greek New Comedy of Menander, chief surviving author of the genre Plautus adapts, as well as from mosaic depictions of particular Menandrian scenes (e.g. Charitōnidēs et al. 1970; Webster 1995). Material remains and representations in art provide some sense of the instrumentation and physical staging of Plautine comedy. And there's just not much else.

In your study of *Hamilton*, the text alone would give you lots of material as you try to develop an understanding of the music: you could identify rhythms, pacing, content and

context, emotion, and style. From photos of other musicals, you could infer the presence of a pit orchestra and audio amplification, and from there hazard some guesses about orchestration, arrangement, and accompaniment techniques. Comparison of the *Hamilton* libretto to those of other musicals – in addition perhaps to notices from newspapers – would demonstrate how musically innovative Miranda is.

All this without a single staff of notated music or a single bar of a recording! But even with such a wealth of data points, you're missing more than you have, most especially when it comes to the lived experience of seeing *Hamilton*. You won't have "I'm not throwing away my shot!" stuck in your head, you won't be able to talk about the tone and timbre and tempo of the songs, and you wouldn't be able to compose plausible tunes for Miranda's lyrics unless you were already familiar with Western music theory, conventions of pop music, and hip-hop stylistics.

Mutatis mutandis, Plautus. In this chapter I use the prolific, definitive work of Timothy J. Moore (especially 2012a) to address a couple of principal questions about music in Plautine comedy. What was the musical performance of Roman comedy like? How does Plautus use music and meter to shape his comedies? Students and scholars of Roman comedy alike should become comfortable thinking about and working with the music. This chapter – a scholarly analysis that also functions as a pedagogical tool – offers an access point to such thinking and such work, and it includes a case study on Plautus's *Bacchides* that demonstrates how straightforward and worthwhile musical analysis of Roman comedy can be.

What Was the Musical Performance of Roman Comedy Like?

That Plautine plays were musicals is attested by the fact that more than half of Plautus's lines were sung with accompaniment. Only one metrical form, the iambic senarius, was spoken without accompaniment. The rest involved song, and not the recitative-style midpoint between speech and song that features in Western opera (Moore 2012a, pp. 92–104). There's no evidence for Western operatic techniques of volume increase, and of course Plautus had no modern amplification technology, or even the acoustics of ancient Greek theaters to work with. So the singing style would most likely have been nasalized, to maximize projection and clarity (2012a, pp. 77–90), in a fashion similar to traditional Beijing opera or some non-Western folk-singing methods. Masks, which covered the entire face and were worn at least by all speaking characters (Gell. NA 5.7; Marshall 2006, p. 127), may have dampened, amplified, or had no effect on performers' voices; the comparison might again be made to Beijing opera, another musical, masked dramatic form.

Actors sang to the accompaniment of a *tibicen*, player of the *tibiae*, the double pipes (Moore 2012a, chapter 1; cf. Sears 2012, pp. 16–26, with photographs of fragmentary instruments surviving from Graeco-Roman Egypt). The pipes were woodwind instruments using a double reed similar to an oboe or bassoon, and with a similarly impressive range of sounds, with variations producible by manipulation of the reed and airflow. The two pipes – attached to the head of the *tibicen* by a buccal strap – could play two different

notes at the same time, and could change notes independently. Various timings and configurations of the pipes increased the range of musical accompaniment available, and circular breathing by the *tibicen* meant the accompaniment could continue unbroken for lengthy periods.

The deployment of music is one of the signal differences between Plautus and the Greek New Comedy he adapted. Menander's texts can reasonably be grouped into "acts" thanks to notations in the manuscripts and papyri, and occasionally a line of scene-ending dialogue, indicating the performance of a song by a chorus unrelated to the characters or actions of the play. In Plautus, by contrast, no such chorus exists; rather, the characters themselves sing throughout the play. Plautus's musical practice – with some spoken passages, some sung passages in a single meter, and some sung passages with profound metrical variety – has somewhat more in common with the music of Aristophanic Old Comedy than Menander has with either. (On the question of the origins of Plautine polymetric songs, see Dumont [1997] and Hurka [2008].) All three, as well as Terence, use music for structuring their works, among other reasons, albeit in different ways and with different effects.

The famous, if perhaps apocryphal, epitaph of Plautus underscores the playwright's remarkable metrical talents (Gell. NA 1.24.3, claiming to be quoting Varro):

*postquam est mortem aptus Plautus, Comoedia luget
scaena est deserta, dein Risus, Ludus Iocusque
et Numeri innumeri simul omnes conlacrimarunt.*

After Plautus died, Comedy grieved,
the stage was abandoned, and Laughter, Play, and Jokes,
plus the immeasurable Meters all cried together in unison.

The *numeri innumeri* of Plautus set him apart from the more limited variety of Menander and Terence and are a signal feature of Plautine style. His musical and metrical virtuosity repays the intense scrutiny of his readership, just as much as it would be obviously on display in actual original performance.

Plautus, as poet and playwright, was also a composer. Plautus's script sets the meter, which guides the *tibicen* and actors both (Moore 2012a, chapter 4). The *tibicen* in turn sets the tempo, presumably in coordination with troupe leadership during rehearsals. The actors worked within these constraints. Pitch, which likely operated in half-step (chromatic) and whole-step (diatonic) scales, was subordinate to rhythm. Musical variety was produced first and foremost through metrical variety, but also from pauses, tempo changes, stress, and accompaniment. Improvisation in sung passages, Moore argues, was likely uncommon (2012a, p. 138; *pace* Zwierlein 1990–1992 and Marshall 2006, p. 241), with extemporization limited to unaccompanied spoken passages and dance (on the latter, see Moore 2012a, chapter 3). Moore describes music as a "principal joy" of Plautus in performance (2012a, p. 25), and his own body of scholarship decisively proves the richness and creative art of music-makers in Rome, in contrast to the jaundiced conventional wisdom of earlier scholarship (e.g. Landels 1999, chapter 8).

How Does Plautus Use Music and Meter to Shape His Comedies?

Song versus speech marks a fundamental division in Roman comedy. It is also one of the most obvious observable features in performance, ancient or modern. As a result, meter and music comprises one of the most basic ways to structure a play. Plautus's standard musical pattern runs as follows (cf. Marshall 2006, chapter 5; Moore 2012a, tables 7.1, 7.2, 9.1, 10.3, Appendix IV):

- I. a passage of iambic senarii (spoken, unaccompanied) – the “rise”
- II. a polymetric *canticum* of various meters (sung, accompanied; melodies varied by meter) – if present, the first part of a “complex fall”
- III. a passage of trochaic septenarii (sung, accompanied; one-line melody repeated many times) – a “simple fall,” or the second part of a “complex fall”
- IV. iterations of “arcs” consisting of [1]–[3], sometimes punctuated by a line or lines of anapestic octonarii (sung, accompanied) offering further structure to the play

Plautus's use of the pattern is regular enough to consider it a convention, and like any of the other conventions of this highly conventional genre, such as masks, stock types, and stock scenes, audiences could be expected to be familiar with it. Thus, divergences from generic or playwright-specific expectations would grab the audience's attention and convey a degree of meaning more immediately or subtly than did dialogue. So, for example, musical openings, as opposed to the usual spoken iambic senarii, flag something unusual about the play just underway (Moore 2012a, pp. 242–245).

Plautine audiences would furthermore have had an instinctual if not conscious familiarity with the intimate workings of Latin meter and prosody. In the same way that American moviegoers can tell by the soundtrack whether they're watching a happy, sad, scary, romantic, triumphant, creepy, or action-packed scene, theatergoers in the time of Plautus would be able to pick up meanings and moods conveyed by shifts in meter, metrical forms, and the scansion of specific passages. Table 17.1 (distilled from Moore 2012a, chapters 5–8) presents some of the principal effects of Plautus's meter types. These meanings are not set in stone or unified, but can function variously by play, scene, and context. Plautus further achieves different musical effects through variance in the numbers and proportions of long and short syllables in a line within the same meter; meter changes; use of rare meters; and motivic use of particular meters within and across plays.

Analysis of Plautine music is neither mysterious nor inaccessibly esoteric. It involves part structural dissection, part close reading, and part literary/theatrical criticism. Here's how to go about performing such an analysis. Table 17.2 lists published analyses and comments by play, and the third section of this chapter undertakes a case study with *Bacchides*. To do one of your own, begin with the bird's-eye view: chunk the play into the standard pattern of spoken iambic senarii followed by sung polymetric *cantica* followed by sung trochaic septenarii. Note the number of these arcs, any deviations from the pattern, and

Table 17.1 Common meanings of plautine meters and metrical effects.

<i>any meter</i>	<i>closure, transition</i>
IAMBO-TROCHAIC METERS (see Fortson 2008), <i>almost 90% of Plautus</i>	
iambic senarius (the only unaccompanied meter), <i>approximately 37% of all lines of Plautus</i>	anticipation, important words, serious moments, characters with theatrical authority or lacking audience sympathy, plans doomed to fail, blocking characters
trochaic septenarius (see esp. Moore 2012a, 146–154), <i>41%</i>	forward motion in plot or characters, false starts that emphasize important words, play endings
trochaic octonarius (see esp. Moore 2012a, 215–236), <i>0.6%</i>	heightened emotion
iambic octonarius, <i>2%</i>	tragic parody (in Terence: structure, characterization, motifs)
iambic septenarius (comicus quadratus), <i>6%</i>	love and love objects
NON-IAMBO-TROCHAIC METERS (<i>associated primarily with women characters</i>)	
Aeolics, including choriamb and wilamowitziani	sing-songiness
anapests (see Boldrini 1984; not used by Terence)	exuberance, discoveries, panic, fury, joy, seduction, Ballio the extraordinary pimp of <i>Pseudolus</i>
anapestic octonarius	structural significance
bacchiacs	orderliness, lamentation, solemnity, mock-seriousness; slow other characters down
colon reizianum, versus reizianus	jarring
cretics	surprise, jumpiness, bounce, farce
Ionics	licentiousness, Saturnalian spirit (on which see Segal 1968)
thymelici	comic shock
METRICAL MODULATION AND EFFECTS	
change from one type of meter to another	emotion, changes in thought (Braun 1970; Maurach 1961)
breakdown from stichic meter to systems of metra/feet	emotion, excitement
change in meter between characters	differences in characterization, disagreements
correspondences in meter and scansion between characters	mirroring, competition
catalexis (cutting off the last element of a line)	closure
enjambment	underscores emotion, emphasizes key words
number, placement, and regularity or irregularity of proportion of long syllables to short; placement or absence of caesurae; elision (particularly across changes in speaker); hiatus	various purposes

Table 17.2 Analyses of music in specific plays of Plautus.

<i>Amphitruo</i>	Dupont (1987); Christenson (2000, chapter 5); Moore (1999, pp. 143–146)
<i>Asinaria</i> *	Henderson (2006, pp. 117–120)
<i>Aulularia</i> *	Marshall (2006, pp. 208–209)
<i>Bacchides</i>	this chapter, section 3
<i>Captivi</i> *	Marshall (2006, pp. 209–210)
<i>Casina</i> *	Marshall (2006, p. 210)
<i>Cistellaria</i>	Moore (2004a)
<i>Curculio</i>	Moore (2005)
<i>Epidicus</i>	Moore (2001a)
<i>Menaechmi</i>	Moore (1999, pp. 136–141; 2012a, chapter 7)
<i>Mercator</i>	Moore (2010)
<i>Miles Gloriosus</i>	Moore (1998)
<i>Mostellaria</i> *	Marshall (2006, p. 219)
<i>Persa</i>	Moore (2001b)
<i>Poenulus</i>	Moore (2004b)
<i>Pseudolus</i>	Moore (2012a, chapter 9)
<i>Rudens</i>	Moore (2012a, pp. 131–134, 188–189)
<i>Stichus</i> *	Moore (2012a, pp. 262–263)
<i>Trinummus</i>	Moore (1998)
<i>Truculentus</i>	Moore (1999, pp. 146–149)
<i>Vidularia</i>	Moore (2012a, p. 16, n. 33)

Plays marked with asterisks (*) would benefit from more extended study.

the length of each section within the arc – by number of metrical elements rather than of lines, whose lengths and durations vary widely. Identify structurally significant lines of anapestic octonarii and what happens in the play starting at those lines.

Next, explain the purpose and significance of each section and arc. What dialogue or plot point causes the end of one section and the beginning of the next, and especially what starts and stops the music? Discuss recurrent meters, their functions in the play, and which meters open the various *cantica*. Then proceed to study each *canticum* in detail – line by line, syllable by syllable, even – looking for notable usage of the techniques laid out at the bottom of Table 17.1. Account for when new meters come in; for slowing down and speeding up through change in meter or simply in proportion of long to short syllables; for which characters effect or control meter change; for repeated motifs, responsions in scansion, and regularity and variety of scansion; for elisions and hiatus; for places where the sense of the Latin doesn't end at line breaks but continues through lines or even meters; and for who sings in the *cantica* and who doesn't.

Case Study: *Bacchides*

The fragmentary state of Plautus's *Bacchides*, particularly of its opening portion, inhibits certainty or perfect analysis of the play's music. It is a task worth attempting, however, given that it is one of Plautus's most polymetric plays (Moore 2012a, p. 311, n. 5). Barsby

points out that the surviving fragments of Menander's *Dis Exapaton*, the Greek model for *Bacchides*, contain spoken passages that correspond to sung passages in Plautus and remarks that the three extant *cantica* of *Bacchides* "all... in different ways suggest large-scale Plautine workmanship" (Barsby 1986, pp. 13–14). The fact that substantial portions of Plautus's Greek original survive allows us to be certain that the music and meter of *Bacchides* are products of Plautus's own conscious artistic decisions, not merely of inspiration by his sources. Furthermore, the play's four polymetric *cantica* put it in the middle of the Plautine pack by number of extant *cantica*, but it contains extant Plautus's longest single *canticum*, at lines 1076–1206.¹

The gist of the play is a double deception plot. The title characters are two sisters named Bacchis, living together in Athens as sex-laborers (on the term, see Witzke 2015). One sister has come to Athens from Samos and is under contract with a soldier, but while still in Samos had attracted the affection of the young Athenian man Mnesilochus, who has persuaded his friend Pistoclerus to keep the soldier away from the Samian Bacchis. In the process, Pistoclerus falls for the Athenian Bacchis. Chrysalus, a trickster enslaved to Mnesilochus, uses schemes centered on letter-writing to trick Mnesilochus's father Nicobulus twice out of money, some of which Mnesilochus uses to pay off the soldier. In the play's long and highly musical conclusion, Nicobulus joins with Pistoclerus's father Philoxenus to go to the Bacchises' house to punish their sons, but the two sisters seduce them and entice them inside instead.

The play's fragmentary beginning likely contains the remains of the first arc. There's evidence for iambic senarii (fr. i–viii in the numbering of de Melo 2011–2013), the rest of the fragments appear to be in a variety of meters, and the non-fragmentary body of the play starts with a passage of the trochaic septenarii that makes for a standard arc ending (lines 35–108). Granted this section, the play has six in all, as follows:

1. iambic senarii (fr. i–viii?), polymetric *canticum* A (fr. ix–xvii?), trochaic septenarii (fr. xviii–xxi?, 35–108)
2. iambic senarii (109–367), trochaic septenarii (368–499)
3. iambic senarii (500–525), trochaic septenarii (526–572)
4. iambic senarii (573–611), polymetric *canticum* B (612–669), trochaic septenarii (670–760)
5. iambic senarii (761–924), polymetric *canticum* C (925–996^a)
6. iambic senarii (997–1075), polymetric *canticum* D (1076–1206), trochaic septenarii (1207–1211, the epilogue)

Other than the extraordinarily long final *canticum* D, the various arcs and passages lie within the standard range for Plautus. Arcs 2–5 are each divided into two approximately equal halves; in arc 4 such division involves grouping the iambic senarii and the *canticum* together. Having six arcs makes *Bacchides* tie with *Amphitruo* for most in extant Plautus (cf. Marshall 2006, pp. 280–281).

Arcs 1, 4, and 6 follow the standard pattern I outlined above, while arcs 2 and 3 skip the *canticum* and arc 5 skips the trochaic septenarii. Moore posits that if *Bacchides* weren't fragmentary, there would be fewer exceptions to the usual pattern (Moore 2012a, p. 253, n. 14). I argue instead that sufficient explanation for the deviations from the pattern can be found in the play's contents. In arc 5, which omits the expected passage of trochaic

septenarii, *canticum* C is itself heavily trochaic, much more so than the other *cantica* of *Bacchides*. In arc 2, which has the longest passages of iambic senarii and trochaic septenarii in the play, the iambic senarii end with Chrysalus laying out his deception scheme to the audience in soliloquy (349–367). The trochaic septenarii begin with Lydus, Pistoclerus's enslaved *paedagogus*, emerging from Bacchis's house with a lamentation in soliloquy about the sisters' vitiating effects on his young master and his intentions to tell Philoxenus about his son's dissolution (369–384). This arc moves forward both halves of the play's storyline; its middle is marked by two monologues of roughly equal duration in which enslaved characters reveal to the audience major developments in plot that will motivate the old men's final advance on Bacchis's house. Omission of the expected polymetric passage communicates that the pace of the play is picking up now after a leisurely and song-filled first arc, wherein the play's basic problem – Mnesilochus and Samian Bacchis's relationship endangered by the soldier's contract – is set out and, in the trochaic septenarii, its secondary complication, Pistoclerus's falling for Athenian Bacchis, arises.

Arc 3, on the other hand, is a self-contained mini-melodrama. In the iambic senarii, Mnesilochus expresses his anger at Bacchis and Pistoclerus, who, as Mnesilochus believes, has fallen in love with her. In the trochaic septenarii, Mnesilochus confronts Pistoclerus, who explains the confusion and the fact that there are two Bacchises. Without a *canticum* to dilate this arc, the falling-out between the two men stands as a tempest in a teapot, resolved as swiftly as it cropped up. Notable in this arc is that Mnesilochus's monologue, in which he falls out of love with Bacchis and determines to return to his father money intended to pay off the soldier, is spoken and unaccompanied. The lack of music underscores both Mnesilochus's rejection of lover-boy status and his function as his own blocking character in relinquishing the money. Meanwhile, Pistoclerus enters singing with accompaniment, and his starting the music with his entrance emphasizes his own new-found love.

Remarkably, there are no anapestic octonarii – the verse form that tends to be structural – in *Bacchides* until the final *canticum*, which begins with one (1076) and has seven others (1078, 1081–1082, 1105, 1151–1153) amid a great deal of anapests in general. Just as remarkably, prior to this *canticum* there are only three lines of any kind of anapests (616, 616^a, 617), unless the lost first *canticum* contained some. Within *canticum* D, anapestic octonarii provide structural subdivisions at lines 1105, where Nicobulus and Mnesilochus meet on stage and join forces, and 1151–1153 (plus anapestic septenarii in the two lines preceding), where the Bacchises divide up the task of mollifying Nicobulus and Philoxenus.

So much for the bird's-eye view; now a closer look at each arc and section. The overall purpose of the mostly-fragmentary first arc is to set up the play's initial problem, and to complicate it by having Pistoclerus fall for Bacchis. Given the shredded state of the *canticum*, it's impossible to identify recurrent meters or the meters that open it. The end of the arc and the switch from song to speech takes place as the Bacchises go inside and the blocking character Lydus complains about Pistoclerus's behavior (108–109).

Arc 2, which has no *canticum*, moves the play's action forward, with Chrysalus laying out his scheme in spoken verse and Lydus, Philoxenus, and Mnesilochus freaking out about Pistoclerus in stichic song. After Chrysalus exits, Lydus brings the music by coming out of Bacchis's house in a fit about Pistoclerus (367–368). The music and the arc end

after Philoxenus entrusts the job of correcting Pistoclerus to Mnesilochus and leaves in a tizzy, and Mnesilochus switches into speech for the beginning of the next arc's tempest in a teapot.

Arc 3, again without a *canticum*, presents the mini-melodrama described above. The switch from spoken iambic senarii into sung trochaic septenarii comes with Pistoclerus's entry, bringing love and eventually reconciliation back on stage. Barsby notes that "the septenarii are unusually 'heavy' [i.e., lots of long syllables] here, reflecting the serious nature of the conversation" (Barsby 1986, p. 143, n.5). The arc ends with the two young men's exit to verify that there are two Bacchises, and the entry in iambic senarii of the soldier's parasite, a blocking character on serious business (499–500).

The purpose of arc 4 is plot exposition that makes the threat of the soldier and the resulting need for money more immediate: in other words, dealing with the consequences of Mnesilochus's rashly returning the money to Nicobulus in arc 3. The conversation between the parasite and Pistoclerus takes place entirely in unaccompanied speech, while Mnesilochus emerges from Bacchis's house in song (612), in trochaic octonarii that reflect his heightened emotion at his earlier actions. Cretics predominate in the *canticum*, which boasts the most metrical variety of the play (barring lost variety in *canticum* A), including trochees, anapests, iambs, bacchiacs, wilamowitzians, thymelici, a choriamb, an aristophanean, an adonean, and an ithyphallic. Within individual lines, Chrysalus's metrical patterning underscores his proclamations of his cleverness, as for instance the adage he proffers at lines 659–662:

— ◡ — ◡ —
 pectus quoi sapit,
 ◡ ◡ — ◡ — ◡ ◡ — ◡ —
 bonus sit bonis, malus sit malis;
 — — ◡ — — ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ | ◡ ◡ —
 utquomque res sit, ita animum habeat.²

A guy who's clever at heart
 should be good to the good and bad to the bad.
 However things're going, he should make his mind up accordingly.

Unusually, the transition from *canticum* to trochaic septenarii is punctuated by a line of spoken iambic senarius as Chrysalus asks the two young men why they're so glum (669: *quid uos maestos tam tristisque esse conspicio?* "why're y'all looking so sad and serious?"). The interruption of the music here emphasizes the importance of Chrysalus's question, which is a basic motivation for the play's plot, and marks the key forward motion in the following trochaic passage, where Chrysalus begins to investigate the newest plot complication. At the end of the arc, Mnesilochus and Pistoclerus leave, entrusting resolution to Chrysalus, who switches out of song to explain in soliloquy his plan (760–761).

Arc 5 represents the meat of Chrysalus's trickery work. After an extensive section of iambic senarii in which Chrysalus tricks Nicobulus and stymies the soldier, Nicobulus exits and Chrysalus re-enters with a lengthy song in iambic octonarii, the meter of paratragedy

(924–925). This meter predominates throughout *canticum* C, with structural markers supplied by lines of trochees. Nicobulus ends the music and the arc at 997 by reading a letter, which preempts the standard trochaic wrap-up and serves as the jumping-off point for Chrysalus's next deception.

The play's last arc has two halves, the first for Chrysalus's completion of his scheme and the second for the raucous concluding farce surrounding the Bacchises. The final passage of spoken verse ends as Chrysalus exits victorious, leaving the stage empty for Philoxenus to enter with a song of despair (1075–1076). As I noted earlier, structurally significant anapestic octonarii open the final *canticum*, which consists mainly of anapests, bacchiacs, and trochees. The *canticum* ends at the short epilogue, sung in trochaic septenarii (1207–1211).

On to the final step in musical analysis of a Plautine play, a closer examination of each *canticum*. Not much can be said about the first *canticum*. Barsby remarks that “the metrical variety of the fragments... implies a complex series of changes back and forth between spoken verse... and song, which has no parallel in the other plays of Plautus” (Barsby 1986, p. 93, n. 4). But this observation depends entirely on the ordering of the fragments; both de Melo (2011–2013) and Marshall (2006, p. 216, n. 55) reorder them such that the spoken verses come prior to the polymetrics and thus preserve the standard pattern of Plautine music. Moore rates it “quite likely that one of the Bacchis sisters brought the first music” (Moore 2012a, p. 246, n.8). They will not sing in polymetrics again until the play's closing *canticum*.

Canticum B, clocking in at 709 metrical elements (Moore 2012a, p. 404), falls on the lengthier half of Plautine polymetrics and is the most metrically diverse song in the play. It breaks down into three parts, each metrically distinct: Mnesilochus's angsty entrance monody (612–624^a), his dialogue with Pistoclerus (625–639^b), and Chrysalus's entrance monody, which ends with the single spoken line discussed earlier. Mnesilochus's heightened emotional state is marked in the first half of his song by his initial trochaic octonarii (plus emotional enjambment: Moore 2012a, p. 226), which yield to panicky anapests and truncated iambs (612–618):

petulans, proteruo, iracundo animo, indomito, incogitato, sine modo et modestia sum, sine bono iure atque honore, incredibilis imposque animi, inamabilis, illepidus uiuo, maleuolente ingenio natus. postremo id mi est quod uolo ego esse aliis. credibile hoc est? nequior nemo est neque indignior quoi di bene faciant nec quem quisquam homo aut amet aut adeat.	trochaic octonarii trochaic septenarius anapestic quaternarius catalectic anapestic quaternarii iambic quaternarius catalectic
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I'm bratty, impulsive, I run hot, got no self-restraint, don't think things through,
 I've got no limits or civility, no respect for right or decency,
 I'm untrustworthy and incompetent, unlovable, charmless,
 I was born mean-spirited. In other words, I've got what I wish
 only others did. Can you believe it?
 Nobody's more worthless, nobody is less deserving
 of the gods' goodwill or of being
 loved or even being talked to.

Mnesilochus expresses his discombobulation with a lack of regularity and plenty of shifts between slower and faster lines. As he shifts thereafter to more firmly resolved denouncements of his self-worth, his lines, now cretics, become strikingly regular for the rest of his monody (e.g. 621–623):

— ◡ — ◡ — — ◡ — ◡ —
 omnibus probris, quae improbis uiris
 — ◡ — — ◡ — — ◡ — ◡ —
 digna sunt, dignior nullus est homo,
 — ◡ — ◡ — — — — ◡ —
 qui patri reddidi omne aurum amans.

Nobody deserves all the shame that shameful men deserve more than me,
 since I returned all the cash to Dad even though I'm in love.

The ensuing dialogue between Mnesilochus and Pistoclerus boasts, as Moore notes, an unusual number of Aeolic verses. Pistoclerus's failed attempts to console Mnesilochus come in cola reiziana, while Mnesilochus's rejections come in choriambic lines, particularly wilamowitzians (2012a, pp. 205–207, 270–271). The choriamb's long-short-short-long, reinforced by Mnesilochus's three-syllable line-end exclamations of *perii* and heated rhetorical questions (626–627^a, 630), the final of which Mnesilochus shouts in elision over the end of Pistoclerus's words of reassurance:

— ◡ — ◡ — ◡ — ◡ — — ◡ — ◡ —
 PIS. heia, bonum habe animum. MNE. unde habeam?

PIS. C'mon, keep a good attitu—
MNE. Where am I gonna get *that*?

The shift from predominantly trochees, anapests, and cretics in Mnesilochus's monody to the heavily Aeolic dialogue matches a change from more elaborate language to simple repartee (Barsby 1986, pp. 149–150, nn. 5–6).

Chrysalus's entrance monody begins, mirroring Mnesilochus's, with three lines of trochaic octonarii (640–642). The frequency of resolution and rarity of single short

- PHIL.* Hey. Where you coming from?
NIC. Where a pathetic unlucky guy comes from.
PHIL. Yikes, me too! I'm exactly where a pathetic unlucky guy belongs.

The two nervously speak over each other, eliding across speaker changes. Farce is similarly anticipated by the cetics in which Nicobulus and Philoxenus commiserate with one another (1109–1115). And, fittingly, the mockingly seductive sisters Bacchis introduce bacchiacs, a meter of mock-seriousness.

This *canticum* presents two classic examples of Plautine trochaic “false starts” (on which see Moore 2012a, 251–253). First, after plenty of polymetric song expressing their anxiety and anger over their sons’ behavior (1076–1116), Nicobulus and Philoxenus knock on Bacchis’s door in trochaic septenarii (1117–1119). According to the standard arc, this metrical switch would signal the end of the polymetrics and the beginning of the business of their revenge. But the Bacchis sisters emerge singing bacchiacs (1120–1139), making fun of Nicobulus and Philoxenus by comparing them to sheep – and slowing down the pace of the music (1117–1120a):

NI. quid dubitamus pultare_atque_huc euocare_ambos foras?
 PH. hau moror. NI. heus Bacchis, iube sis actutum_aperiri fores,
 nisi mauoltis fores et postis comminui securibus.
 BA. quis sonitu_ac tumultu tanto nominat me_at-
 que pultat aedis?

- NIC.* Why’re we waiting to knock and get both Bacchises out here?
PHIL. I’m not stopping ya.
NIC. Hey, Bacchis! Get these doors open right now,
 unless you’d rather the doors and posts splintered with axes!
BAC. Who’s calling my name and knocking on my door
 with all this noise and ruckus?

The old men respond by abandoning their trochaics and acceding to Bacchis’s bacchiacs. As Moore notes, “[v]isually and metrically they stop the angry old men in their tracks” (2012a, p. 198).

Second, once the *meretrices* finish their mockery and start to go back inside (1140), Nicobulus tells them to stay (1140^a), after which the meter returns to trochaic septenarii, with slower scansion this time (1141–1148). Nicobulus uses this meter to threaten the Bacchises with violence unless they send out the sons: he is trying to get plot-action going again. But the Bacchises demonstrate continued control over music and meter as they reply with anapests (septenarii, 1149–1150, and structurally significant octonarii, 1151–1153) as they divide up the two old men for pacification. Their exuberant and seductive anapests

remain triumphant without interruption by any other meter for the rest of the play, until the epilogue brings trochaic septenarii at 1207.

Conclusion

Through this painstaking process of musical analysis, several observations about the nature of Plautine comedy arise. First, music is of fundamental importance to the architecture of these plays, especially as a structural tool. Second, meaning and meter are inextricably interrelated. The play's contents and its music are entirely interdependent: you cannot make sense of the meters without recourse to dialogue and plot, nor can the genius of Plautus's dramaturgy be preserved without careful attention to and knowledge of his metrics. Finally, Plautus as a composer possessed the same mastery and sophistication of musical characterization, motif, and thematization as Verdi or Wagner – it's just harder to see it without scores, recordings, and live sung shows, or native fluency both in Latin and in the Graeco-Roman musical tradition.

NOTES

- 1 I have created a webpage at <http://classics.wfu.edu/bacchides> to present a detailed *schema metrorum* of this play, which I derived from collation of Lindsay (1910), Questa (1995), and de Melo (2011–2013). Also at that site is a line-by-line listing of meter, character speaking, character type, and, for *cantica*, the Latin text of the line. (For this latter document, I am indebted to Serena S. Witzke and the members of her spring 2016 Roman Comedy course at Wake Forest University, particularly Sarah M. Mulloy.) The first paragraph of my “Further reading” section, along with Tables 17.1–17.2 in this chapter, provide useful aids for performing musical analysis of the kind I undertake here on *Bacchides*.
- 2 Throughout, the text is that of de Melo (2011–2013), the scansion of Questa (1995), collated with Questa (2008). Translations are my own.

FURTHER READING

Besides the references listed in Table 17.2, students of the music in particular plays and passages of Plautus will want to refer to Moore (2016) for a richly detailed and searchable database of Roman comedy's meter. My review of Moore's book (Gellar-Goad 2014) offers a detailed entrée to his oeuvre on Plautine and Terentian music as well as links to useful web resources for teaching music in Roman comedy; Gratwick (2014) offers an unfavorable assessment of the book (with response by Moore 2015b). If you can read Italian, also consult Questa 2007.

Teachers of Roman comedy should start with Moore (2012b), plus Gellar-Goad and Moore (2015). The videos from the 2012 National Endowment for the Humanities

Summer Institute on Roman Comedy in Performance (for which I served as composer in residence) display a variety of approaches to staging Plautine music today (see also James et al. 2015; Moore 2015a; and cf. Bexley 2014; Franko 2014), while Hagel and Harrauer (2005) include a compact disc with recordings of reconstructed ancient Greek musical performances, and Moore (2012c) has published online some recordings of Plautine *cantica*. For other handbook chapters on music and meter in Roman comedy, see Moore (2013, 2015c, 2019); Deufert (2014). Comotti (1989, chapter 3) offers a succinct, broad overview of Roman music as a whole.

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Comic Technique in Plautus's *Asinaria* and *Casina*

Martin T. Dinter

“Why are you laughing?” (Plaut. *Aul.* 719)¹

Roman comedy is no laughing matter. Behind its jokes, ancient views shine through on such topics as the relative positions of slaves, women, fathers, and sons in Greek and Roman society, as well as samples for business contracts and the practical details of prostitution in antiquity. Indeed, the popularity comedy has enjoyed among scholars in the last decades showcases that they take this genre seriously. Even during discussions of “comic technique” – a term conspicuously absent from most indices of scholarly monographs – scholars have often tended to prefer “old jokes,” which allowed them to draw attention to Plautus’s Greek models instead of analyzing his innovations. In this chapter, however, I will be less concerned with *Quellenforschung*. Instead I shall discuss but a selection of examples of Plautus’s comic technique from both *Casina* and *Asinaria* to find out why we are laughing at and with Roman comedy. In short, this chapter will tell some jokes and then try to explain them.

Before embarking on this analysis, it is worth establishing why laughter occurs at all. I shall illustrate the various responses to this query in relation to a brief exchange in Plautus’s *Casina*:

LYSIDAMUS. So do you prefer to be a freedman right now, but unmarried, or to live out your life as a married slave, both you and your children? This is your choice; take which of these options you want.

CHALINUS. If I were free, I’d live at my own expense; but now I’m living at yours. I’m determined not to give in to anyone about *Casina*.
(290–294)

Some scholars explain humor in terms of “discrepancy theory:” laughter ensues whenever reliable thought patterns are proven wrong (Miller 1988, p. 15; Minsky 1988, pp. 274–281). According to this interpretation, Chalinus’s refusal to be manumitted is funny since it contradicts the heuristic that freedom is superior to slavery (293–294). Another theory states that laughter results from a sense of superiority (Martin 2010; Lintott 2016); Plautus’s audience perceives Chalinus to be more foolish than themselves because he chooses lifelong servitude for the sake of a mere girl. Yet others contend that laughter’s purpose is to resolve states of suspense (Leitch 1985; Turner and Stets 2005). In this case, the suspense evoked by Lysidamus’s tantalizing offer is broken by Chalinus’s flippant response; as a result, the audience must laugh to eliminate residual tension. Recent studies nevertheless tend to reject social theories of laughter in favor of neurological explanations. Brain imaging indicates that laughter cannot be attributed to a single cause, for it involves various structures ranging from the mesocorticolimbic dopaminergic system – the “reward center” of the brain – to the amygdala, which regulates emotions and memory. However, the involvement of the tempoparietal junction, which resolves perceived incongruities, suggests that – at least among the extant models – “discrepancy theory” is the most accurate explanation for laughter (Rodden 2018). Significantly, all of these theories relate to universal phenomena such as cognitive processes and cerebral anatomy. Thus, the Romans likely laughed for the same reasons that we do, even though consensus on the nature of these exact “reasons” has not yet been reached.

Verbal Techniques

At the very beginning of Plautus’s *Casina*, the slaves Olympio and Chalinus are posturing: both are encouraged by their respective masters, a father and his son, to marry the slave girl Casina, so as to allow them sexual access to her. We might thus worry for the well-being of the innocent young girl, had the prologue not stated that she will turn out to be freeborn in the end (78–83). Accordingly, she will not commit any indecent acts, at least for the moment. Plautus has even cut the standard *anagnorisis* (“recognition scene”) from his play (Fraenkel 2007, p. 199). Instead he, or a later producer, signposts in the prologue that the conflict we are about to watch is pure entertainment and attempts to entice the audience:

Plautus takes care to ensure his play a good reception both by stimulating the spectators with this friendly banter (very much as a contemporary nightclub “warm-up man” might work on the audience before the main event) and by encouraging them with reminders of the mood appropriate to a holiday [...The speaker of the prologue of] the *Casina* urges, “Away with sorrowing, thoughts about your borrowing...the games are underway, and even bankers get a holiday!” (Beacham 1995, p. 40, quoting *Cas.* 23, 25)

Most scholars discussing the intensely comical brawl at the beginning of *Casina*, in which Olympio and Chalinus are vying for the girl (90–142), have highlighted the provenance of their “comic anger” to link the scene to its Greek models. Anderson’s (1993, p. 54) analysis exemplifies this tendency:

The surface comedy in the dispute – threats, insults, and much comic anger – closely resembles what Diphilos [poet of Greek New Comedy, contemporary with Menander] does as he portrays the tug-of-war between Gripus and Trachalio in the original of *Rudens*. But, whereas the dispute of *Rudens* masks the progress towards recognition, this dispute conceals a guilty comic amour of a lecherous old husband. Olympio talks and acts confidently and menacingly, because he knows that he has the master on his side; Chalinus stands up to his threats, but he has little but right on his side, no matter what Cleostrata [the wife] does. And she probably does little in Diphilos, until after the lot drawing. Only then do Chalinus and she discover the real purposes of Lysidamus [lecherous old husband] and start to conspire to frustrate him.

Such comparisons of course provide much-needed context for understanding character motivations and the role of the passage within the overall narrative of the play. However, picking apart the comic techniques used to create this atmosphere of “comic anger” is equally rewarding. I will endeavor to explain the humor behind this dialogue through a close reading of Olympio’s outburst, which brings the argument between the rivals to a temporary end:

*concludere in fenstram firmiter,
unde auscultare possis quom ego illam ausculer:
quom mi illa dicet, “mi animule, mi Olympio,
mea uita, mea mellilla, mea festiuitas,
sine tuos ocellos deosculer, uoluptas mea,
sine amabo ted amari, meus festus dies,
meus pullus passer, mea columba, mi lepus,”
quom mi haec dicentur dicta, tum tu, furcifer,
quasi mus, in medio pariete uorsabere.
nunc ne tu te mi respondere postules,
abeo intro. taedet tui sermonis.*

You’ll be fixed firmly in the window frame, so you can overhear from over there when I’m kissing Casina. When she says to me, “My sweetheart, my Olympio, my life, my honey, my happiness, let me kiss your eyes, my pleasure, please let me make love to you, my day of delight, my sparrow-chick, my dove, my hare,” when these words are said to me, then, you criminal, like a mouse you’ll squirm in the middle of the wall. Now, so you won’t give me any backtalk, I’m going inside. I’ve had enough of your chatter. (132–142)

In this passage, Plautus amuses his audience by deploying three key comic techniques. He uses exaggeration to evoke the bravado of Olympio’s boast, highlights Olympio’s disdain for Chalinus in his contemptuous articulation, and epitomizes the power play between the two love-rivals through animal similes.

First, the terms of endearment that Olympio imagines will be spoken by Casina, the girl at the heart of the quarrel, are comic because of their sheer quantity: the five lines delivered in her voice include nine such appellations, along with one direct and intimate address to *mi Olympio* (“my [darling] Olympio”). The nicknames are also comic due to their exaggerated character: the diminutives *animule* and *mellilla*, while idiomatically rendered as “sweetheart” and “honey,” mean “my wee soul” and “my little honey.”² *Meus festus dies* comes across as equally over-the-top due to its double meaning, evoking equally a “day of

delight” and a “religious feast-day.” Plautus’s comic technique uses the term hyperbolically as a sobriquet for a human being, especially a mere slave such as Olympio.

Second, Plautus conveys the contempt that Olympio harbors for Chalinus by scattering plosives throughout the dialogue; as a result, Olympio “spits” at his counterpart while pronouncing *possis*, *pullus passer*, *pariete*, and *postules*. As Poyatos (1993, p. 107) observes, a quick succession of plosives “can be used paralinguistically to convey contempt.” The alliterated fricatives in *fenstram firmiter* similarly resemble snarls and therefore contribute to Olympio’s intimidating demeanor (Elsen 2010, p. 138). The repeated “m” sounds, not only in the terms of endearment but also in *mus* and *mi* [*respondere*], provide further opportunities for grotesquely funny delivery. In order to project these nasal consonants, attached as they are to monosyllabic words, the actor must exhale forcefully; in so doing, he produces huffing noises which evoke exaggerated disdain (Tronnier 1998, p. 38). As ancient theatrical masks amplified their wearer’s voices by 18 decibels on average (Kontomichos et al. 2014, p. 1446), these sound effects would have been easily audible to the audience. Moreover, Olympio’s aggressive articulation is especially effective as it contrasts with the “maidenly” gestures he must imitate in order to mimic Casina; since her character does not speak during the play, the brutish demeanor which he exhibits in this scene is incongruously superimposed upon the identity of the “pretty and tender” girl (108).

Third, the animal imagery that Olympio conjures up contributes to the comic technique of this dialogue. Olympio describes himself, in Casina’s voice, as three different animals: sparrow, dove, and hare. These creatures reinforce Olympio’s self-asserted status as lover, for they commonly have sexual connotations. In antiquity, both the sparrow and the dove were associated with Venus. For example, Sappho describes the goddess’ chariot as pulled by “beautiful sparrows with whirring, fast-beating wings” (Sappho fr. 1.9–12; cf. Hooper 1985), and Ovid attests that doves were customarily burned on “Idalian [=Cyprian] hearths” as sacrifices to Venus (Ov. *Fast.* 1.452). Similarly, the hare is often used as an erotic symbol due to its pederastic associations (Mitchell 2004, p. 27). The hare also furnishes Olympio with an opportunity for sound play; *lepus* is a near homonym of *lepos*, meaning “wit,” a word that Plautus also uses as a comical term of endearment later in the play (235–236). While Olympio thus showcases self-inflation, he uncharitably compares Chalinus to a common mouse. As both characters as slaves are on the lowest rung of the social hierarchy, Olympio’s assertion of his dominance does not amount to much in the “real life” of comedy. Their equally low status does, however, explain why Olympio chooses to dominate his rival by coercing him to watch an erotic interaction. This forced voyeurism emasculates Chalinus by “cuckolding” him (Sedgwick 1985, pp. 49–66). Olympio’s threat to bind and taunt Chalinus is reminiscent of bondage practices, where, as Weinberg et al. (1984) point out, physical constraint and verbal humiliation are similarly used to signify sexual dominance. Moreover, as the prologue indicates, both Olympio and Chalinus are simply being used as instruments of seduction by their masters (52–53); hence, neither has a chance with Casina.

As we have seen from my brief analysis of the passage above, Roman comedy is comparable to a good Disney movie or an episode of *The Simpsons*, both of which offer different levels of entertainment to their diverse audiences; comic technique invites the audience to decode depending on their ability or preference. The young will giggle at jests different

from those their elders find funny, and the educated may catch the occasional learned wordplay while the innocent might miss a dirty joke. Accordingly, Plautus's audience is indeed spoiled for choice as to what they might most appreciate in Olympio's multilayered speech. The complex and complementary comic techniques incorporated into these mere 11 lines include wordplay, alliteration, gesture, and imagery. Identifying these elements enables us to understand why exactly Roman comedy is humorous and encourages rereadings of Plautus as a comedian in his own right; that is, one who employs intertexts strategically instead of merely aping Greek models. The rest of this chapter will thus offer a reading of two of Plautus's plays, *Casina* and *Asinaria*, to examine Plautus's comic technique and how exactly Plautus makes them entertaining on multiple levels.

Physical Techniques

As Olympio's speech indicates, humor in Roman comedy is sometimes generated by such verbal means as jokes, wordplay, puns, ambiguities, antithesis, hyperbole, mythological or grotesque comparisons, irony, metaphors, and riddles. At other times, however, its main source is nonverbal and entails techniques such as knockabout buffoonery or wild gesticulation. In this latter case, performance tends to be heavily dependent on physical demeanor, ranging from gestures to entrances, exits, and blocking on the stage, as well as on vocal communication – sounds and modulations of the voice – and even matters of production and staging: costumes, props, elements of scenery, or stage properties in general. While these nonverbal elements are ephemeral and therefore difficult to reconstruct with certainty, some segments of dialogue contain embedded stage directions. In *Casina*, Plautus stages one such bout of physical comedy between Olympio, who is urged on by Lysidamus, and Chalinus:

- Lys.* (to *Olympio*) Hit that tedious creature's face. Come on, are you doing anything? (to *Chalinus*) Don't you dare raise your hand.
OLYM. Should I strike him with a fist or a slap?
Lys. Do as you like.
OLYM. (punching *Chalinus*) Take that!
CLEO. Why did you touch him?
OLYM. Because my Jupiter told me to.
CLEO. (to *Chalinus*): Smash his face in return.
OLYM. (beaten): I'm whapped! I'm being pummeled to death! (to *Lysidamus*) Help, Jupiter! (404–407)

This scene's comic technique is to contrast what it *should* be – a violent fistfight between two hot-headed slaves – and what it actually devolves into: a hesitant and awkward duel where both combatants have to be instructed, not unlike marionettes on a string, by their respective owners. On stage, this sense of reluctance is conveyed through unscripted actions; Chalinus's actor must make an attempt to lift his arm, hence prompting Lysidamus's comment, "Don't dare raise your hand," and Olympio's actor must ball his fingers into a fist and then flatten out his palm while asking Lysidamus for advice. The appeal of this exchange also lies in its mythological parallels. The slaves are fighting a proxy battle between

the old man Lysidamus and his wife Cleostrata; since the former is identified as Jupiter, his wife must represent Juno (Segal 1987, pp. 24–25). This analogy subversively reduces the king and queen of the gods to a brawling couple; what is more, Chalinus, the fighter representing “Juno,” emerges victorious, thus subverting traditional Roman gender roles. This episode is therefore more than mere buffoonery in that it parodies both religious and social norms.

A comparable scene takes place in *Asinaria*, where Leonida beats his fellow slave Libanus while impersonating the steward Saurea:

- LEON. If only I had a cattle prod in my hand right now –
 MERCHANT. (*stepping between Libanus and Leonida*) Calm down, please.
 LEON. with which I might bludgeon your ribs, whose skin’s grown so thick from the beatings. (*shoving the merchant aside*) Get out of my way and let me kill this guy, who’s always inflaming me with rage. I can never order this crook to do anything just once; nope, I have to command and bark the same things a hundred times over. And so now, by Hercules, with all my shouting and anger, I’m not up to the job anymore. (*pointing to the ground with his cane*) Didn’t I tell you to take this manure away from the door here, you villain? (*pointing at the columns of the house*) Didn’t I tell you to wipe the cobwebs from the columns? (*pointing to the door*) Didn’t I tell you to shine these doorknobs of ours? It’s pointless. I have to walk around with the cane as if I were lame. Just because for these mere three days I’m engaged in business at the forum, which can’t be interrupted, trying to find somebody seeking cash on interest, you slaves snooze here at home in the meantime, and the master lives in a pig-pen not a house. So now take that! (*gives Libanus a blow with his cane*). (418–431)

In contrast to the bout between Chalinus and Olympio, where hesitation generates humor, this exchange is comic on account of its intense blocking. Leonida becomes carried away despite having been asked to merely imitate Saurea: his wild gesticulations with the cane, which is first turned toward the ground, then to the columns and door of the house, and finally upon Libanus, are all part of this exaggeration (O’Sullivan 2011, p. 37). In addition, Libanus cannot fight back, since he “deserves” this torment for not thoroughly planning out their double-act, even though Leonida has already warned that he intends to strike “a blow to [Libanus’s] cheek” (371–372; cf. Fitzgerald 2019). Plautus’s parody of an overly strict overseer would also have resonated with a Roman audience. In particular, if this group primarily consisted of slaves, as Richlin (2017, p. 26) provocatively suggests, then they might chuckle at their familiar tormentors magnified to grotesque proportions on the stage. Even the slave-owning classes might recognize themselves or their overseers in the figure of Saurea. This identification is conducive to humor, since comedy is most effective when it serves as a mirror of reality:

By its very nature, comedy undermines our involvement with the characters, barely maintaining a dramatic illusion. It might depict violent or deadly action, but does so in a way that

invites us to observe plot machinery *as* machinery. Every comic actor is therefore something of a deconstructionist, calling attention to the way we manufacture our socialised selves. (Naremore 1988, p. 115)

Verbal and Physical Elements with Audience Engagement

As these examples highlight, comic dialogue often combines verbal and nonverbal elements, to the point that they become inseparable in some stock scenes, such as the entrance of the *servus currens* ("running slave") or the door-knocking routine (see respectively Csapo 1989; Marshall 2006, pp. 159–202). Dialogues that "break the fourth wall" by having actors deliver asides to the audience also exemplify this mix of physical and verbal comedy:

- LEON. I'd be willing to be a slave (*servire*) my whole life if I could just meet Libanus.
- LIB. At least through my help you'll never be freed any sooner, by Hercules.
- LEON. I'll even give from my back two hundred swelling blows.
- LIBANUS: (*to the audience*) He's generous with his property; he carries his whole treasure on his back.
[...]
- LEON. I'll hurry up so I won't procure protection for the booty after it's too late.
- LIB. (*to the audience*) What kind of booty is that? I'll go up to him and worm it out, whatever it is. (*to Leonida, loudly*) I bid you hello at the top of my voice, with all my strength. (274–276, 295–297)

Leonida's hyperbolic assertions provide fodder for Libanius's witty asides. The former insincerely wishes for eternal slavehood through the verb *servire*; the latter mocks this sentiment by alluding to manumission. Similarly, after Leonida employs the terminology of commerce, Libanus continues this theme by referring to "property" and "treasure." Libanus thus mimics Leonida's own language in order to mock him. Plautus moreover harnesses this exchange to establish rapport between the audience and Libanus, since they share in a joke from which Leonida is excluded (Moore 1998, pp. 47–48). By asking the audience a direct question – "What kind of booty is that?" – Libanus also draws attention to the purpose of the subsequent dialogue, in which he learns of Demaenetus's command to obtain by fraud 20 *minae* originally meant for his wife Artemona (359–369). As the consequences of this scheme dominate the remainder of the play, Libanus's query signposts the narrative's progression.

Audience engagement is also played to comic effect in ensemble scenes, which typically consist of a pair eavesdropping on another set of characters (Franko 2004). *Asinaria* features one such interaction, where the parasite joins Artemona as she overhears a brutally honest conversation between her husband Demaenetus, the courtesan Philenium, and her son Argyrippus:

- ART. (*quietly*) Poor me, I'm ruined! How he kisses her, the villain, old fogey fit for the coffin!
- DEM. By god, much sweeter breath than my wife's!
- PHIL. Tell me, please, does your wife's breath smell bad?
- DEM. I'd rather drink puke, if I have to, than kiss her.
- ART. (*quietly*) Do you say so? By god, that thing you've said about me comes with big trouble for you. Go on then, just come back home, and I'll make sure you find out what a hazard it is to vilify a wife with a dowry.
- PHIL. My, you're a pitiful wretch.
- ART. (*quietly*) And my he deserves it.
- ARG.: What do you say, dad? Do you love mother at all?
- DEM. I her? I love her *now*, since she's not here.
- ARG. What about when she is here?
- DEM. Then I wish she were dead.
[...]
- PARASITE. (*to the audience*) Is anyone running to summon the undertaker?
(892–901, 910)

This scene is characterized by dramatic irony; the audience is aware that Artemona is listening, unlike the three interlocutors who, ignorant of this fact, insult her relentlessly. Demaenetus's increasingly uncharitable comments draw in the audience, who feel impelled to stop him, but are unable to do so, as he progresses from complaining about his wife's breath to wishing for her death. As Marshall (2006, p. 167 n. 16) observes, Demaenetus's dialogue would be even more offensive without the eavesdropping scenario: "The stage action works counter to the moral difficulties of the situation." Artemona's reactions to this crescendo of slander are riveting due to her growing indignation, which culminates in a fit of rage so murderous that the parasite, mocking her anger, asks if anyone from the audience will "summon the undertaker" for Demaenetus. Plautus thus evokes three distinct reactions in the audience during this split-focus scene: disbelief at Demaenetus's misbehavior; appreciation of Artemona's self-righteous anger; and finally, guided by the parasite, ridicule at the lack of self-control displayed by every character in this scene. As all these passages highlight, physical humor, whether deriving from the actors' gestures or from the setup of a scene, is a prominent feature of Plautus's comic technique.

Animal Imagery, Sexual Jokes, and a Hierarchy of Humor

Plautus' use of imagery, especially the animal imagery of which both *Casina* and *Asinaria* feature numerous examples (Fantham 1972, pp. 72–183), remains underexplored. This feature is particularly suited to the latter play, whose title translates as "comedy of asses"; the play itself centers upon the money paid for a herd of asses, which, once intercepted by the *servi callidi* ("crafty slaves") Libanus and Leonida, provides the protagonist

Argyrippus with the funds to free his favorite courtesan, Philenium (347–349). Plautus interweaves this storyline throughout the play via numerous animal metaphors. Philenium defends her right to love by claiming that “even some shepherd who pastures other people’s sheep has some lamb of his own with which he consoles his hopes” (539–540). Similarly, in a reference to the clandestine nature of his mission, Libanus wishes for a stick that he might “beat the asses [i.e. copper coins/money] with if they begin to bray out of this wallet” (589–591). The use of livestock as a metaphor for money is typically Plautine (cf. *Pers.* 265 and 317; *Truc.* 66 and 956; Fontaine 2006, p. 280). Here even the characters are themselves transformed into beasts of burden: in an inversion of slave–master relations, Argyrippus is forced to carry Libanus on his back to wheedle out the money (701–711). During this onerous process, to which the actors might draw attention by clumsily “crossing” the stage, the slave patronizingly addresses his master in equine terms: “Well done, there’s no horse that’s smarter than you” (704), “I’ll take you off the barley immediately if you don’t get into a trot” (706), and “I’ll drive you uphill a-gallop-ing” (708). This farcical situation, which is reminiscent of ancient mime, acts out the comedy’s animal-themed title while also providing an occasion for physical comedy: Argyrippus’s red-faced exhaustion – “Please, Libanus, that’s enough now” (707) – creates a striking visual contrast alongside Libanus’s triumphant refusal to get off his high horse (Henderson 2006, pp. 199–201).

While subversive, however, this scene nevertheless obeys the power relations cemented in Roman comedy: the son-in-love and not the *paterfamilias*, Demaenetus, is humiliated by an overreaching slave. On account of his position, Demaenetus is mocked only through the nonverbal – and therefore less humiliating – comic technique of irony, and only by characters of high status such as his own *uxor dotata* (“wealthy wife”), Artemona (Lowe 1992, p. 158). She undermines his credibility by listing his imaginary friends and colleagues in alphabetical order, thus drawing attention to the similarities between these obviously made-up names (*Clinia...Dinia...*), and demonstrating that Demaenetus is not only a lecher but also an inept liar:

He says he’s going off to Archidemus, Chaerea, Chaerestratus,
Clinia, Chremes, Cratinus, Dinia, Demosthenes:
but he’s corrupting his son at a whore’s and hanging out in brothels. (865–867)

Such relatively mild attacks play to the sensibilities of Roman audiences, who demanded that the dignity of the *paterfamilias* should remain intact.

In *Casina*, Cleostrata similarly mocks her husband, Lysidamus, in an indirect manner by comparing him unfavorably against their more successful neighbor, Alcesimus:

But look, here he comes, that pillar of the senate, that protector of the people,
my neighbor, who provides my husband with an empty spot.
My, he’d not be a bargain even at the price of a bushel of salt. (536–538)

The seemingly conciliatory – and therefore feminine – beginning to Cleostrata’s speech is envenomed, for she follows on with a biting remark on Lysidamus’s worthlessness; such outbursts of “verbal aggression” are typical of Plautine wives (Dutsch 2008, p. 82; cf.

Mercator, where Demipho laments the dangers of female sarcasm: “She’ll kill me with her curses; I’m afraid my wife’ll castrate me like a he-goat,” 272–275). Indeed, in place of a direct attack she mocks her husband throughout the play by employing animal imagery. She first compares him to a “white fly” (239), an insect “proverbially associated with lechery” (MacCary and Willcock 1976, p. 31); the color is an unflattering reference to Lysidamus’s advanced age, which has left him with white hair (Beacham 1995, p. 96). Later in the play, she calls him and his friend Alcesimus “old castrated rams” (535) in a comic antithesis: by presenting them as impotent, she instead calls attention to their hyper-sexuality, on account of which they have hurried her out of the house so as to enjoy Casina in peace (531–533). Even Alcesimus bemoans Lysidamus’s lust through an animal metaphor; he calls his friend a “worthless, toothless goat” (550; the sexual connotations of goats feature prominently in the half-goat form of Pan and the goatskin costumes of the Lupercalia; Wiseman 1995, p. 82).

Animal imagery is indeed particularly versatile in that it easily integrates with sexual jokes without becoming crude or offensive. One of the most prominent examples occurs in *Asinaria*, where the *lena* (“brothel madam”) Cleareta compares her young male clients to fish:

For a madam, a lover is exactly like a fish: he’s worthless unless he’s fresh. A fresh one is juicy; a fresh one is sweet; a fresh one you can prepare whatever way you want, pan-fried or baked: you can turn it any way it turns you on. (178–180)

The gustatory imagery (“juice, sweetness”) is inherently erotic, as it implies that Cleareta and her employees have “tasted” their visitors. Similarly, the tactile manipulation described in the phrase “turn it any way it turns you on” is evocative of skin-to-skin contact and varied sexual positions. Cleareta’s insistence on freshness moreover leads into a joke on male impotence. Due their association with female genitalia, even fresh fish carry unmasculine connotations (Hooke 1961). Fish that have lost their “freshness” grow yet more flaccid and are therefore identified with nonfunctioning male genitalia; from an economic perspective, such a lover would indeed be “worthless” to a brothel madam. On the contrary, a “fresh” lover represents a source of profit:

*Is dare uolt, is se aliquid posci, nam ibi de pleno promitur;
neque ille scit quid det, quid damni faciat: illi rei studet.
Vult placere sese amicae, uolt mihi, uolt pedisequae,
uolt famulis, uolt etiam ancillis; et quoque catulo meo
subblanditur nouos amator, se ut quom uideat gaudeat.*

A fresh [lover] wants to provide, he wants to be asked for something, since then it’s coming from a full store. He doesn’t know what he’s giving, what loss he’s incurring; he’s eager for it. He wants to please his girlfriend, he wants to please me, he wants to please the attendant, he wants to please the slaves, and he also wants to please the slave-girls; a new lover even pets my little dog so that it’s glad to see him. (181–185)

The financial language emphasizes that, despite her ribald jokes on “fish,” Cleareta’s true motive in desiring “fresh” clients is to extract payment from them. *Damnum*, meaning “monetary loss,” is particularly transactional (cf. Sen. *Controv.* 10.11), and the verb

promere often takes money as its object (cf. Cic. *Verr.* 2.3.84). The anaphora with *vult* (“he wants”) similarly evokes the limitless profit that derives from an eager young lover, who is willing to spend money at every level of the brothel hierarchy ranging from his *amica* – which in this context also means “favorite escort” – to low-status figures such as male and female slaves (*famulis, ancillis*) and even nonhuman characters such as the puppy (*catulo*). Cleareta’s mockery of overeager clients can also be read as an attempt to rebalance the power inequalities inherent to prostitution (James 2006). Although “fresh fish” control her employees financially, she subverts their dominance by portraying their efforts as a mere joke (on Cleareta as a “woman in control,” Fantham 2015; Dutsch 2019; on the subversive power of humor, Paletz 1990).

Cleareta reverts to sexual humor when describing her profession of ensnaring young men as a hunt: as “baits,” prostitutes use alluring words to trap clients, who are analogous to birds. Cleareta demonstrates such a “baiting” in action by speaking in sensual language, which seduces the audience with its suggestive assonance:

*Itidem hic apud nos: aedes nobis area est, auceps sum ego,
esca est meretrix, lectus illex est, amatores aues;
bene salutando consuescunt, compellando blanditer,
osculando, oratione uinnula, uenustula.
Si papillam pertractauit, haud <id> est ab re aucupis;
saviū si sumpsit, sumere eum licet sine retibus.*

It’s the same thing at our place: the house is our fowling-floor, I am the fowler, the prostitute is the bait, the bed is the decoy, and the lovers are the birds. They get familiar through kindly greeting, seductively calling, kissing, caring and charming chitchat. If he’s fondled her breast, that’s not bad for the fowler. If he’s nabbed a kiss, you can nab him without nets. (219–225)

The sound of this speech is indeed appealing to the ear, for it evokes an interlocking melody, an effect primarily apparent from the numerous appearances of the “e” sound in its second line.³ This phoneme first appears in the first syllable of *esca*: it is then duplicated in *est* and in the first two syllables of *meretrix*. It appears twice more in the first syllable of *lectus* and the second syllable of *illex*, again in the subsequent *est*, and also in the final syllables of *amatores* and *aues*. Linked together in this way by a single sound, the entire line comes across as well-crafted and eloquent. In general, the assonance in Cleareta’s speech results from repeated vowels: the first line features an abundance of “a” sounds, such as in the first syllable of *apud* as well as the first and final syllables of *area*. Similarly, the third and fourth lines feature the “o” sound, not only in the final syllable of each gerund (*salutando, compellando, osculando*), but also in the first syllables of *osculando* and *oratione*. As vowels are typically ascribed “feminine” connotations – as opposed to “masculine” consonants – Cleareta’s reliance on these sounds creates a sense of voluptuousness (Genette 1995, pp. 309–336). The sounds “e,” “a,” and “o” are moreover erotic in that they reproduce sexually charged moans; the speech therefore onomatopoetically mirrors its erotic content. Equally suggestive is the sibilance of the final line: *saviū, si, sumpsit, sumere, sine, retibus*. These repeated “s” sounds resemble whispers, thus reproducing the “sweet addresses” of which Cleareta speaks. The overall effect is one of “enchantment”:

not unlike the young clients of Cleareta's brothel, the audience is also lured in by her musical speech (Dutsch 2008, pp. 62–63).

Despite its voluptuous sounds, Cleareta's bawdy speech more closely resembles Olympio's virile threat quoted above than the ladylike irony employed by Cleostrata and Artemona. In the case of female characters, therefore, Plautus's comic technique is dictated by class rather than gender: high-status women typically resort to "feminine" irony, while low-status women mirror the ribald speech of their male counterparts.

In contrast, the speech patterns of male characters are not tied to their social class. At *Casina*'s climax, a faux wedding between Chalinus masquerading as Casina and Olympio, the lustful old husband Lysidamus resorts to lowbrow verbal humor, while his slaves speak decorously. Olympio's dialogue during this scene indeed paints him as uncharacteristically conservative. Upon hearing Pardalisca's advice that the he-bride should "step gently over the threshold" so as to "always stand above [his] husband" (815–818), he responds: *mala malarum monstrat* ("The bad woman is showing her bad ways to a bad girl," 826). By criticizing his bride's assertion of independence, Olympio conveys his support for traditional gender roles (O'Bryhim 1989, p. 100). This transformation contrasts with his previous persona; the stern groom barely resembles the slave who threatened Chalinus with torture-by-voyeurism. By thus portraying Olympio as a newly-formed patriarch, Plautus pokes fun at the figure of the Roman *paterfamilias*: if a rogue can morph into a seemingly respectable husband through marriage alone, who is to say that the typical *paterfamilias* is not also a wastrel at heart?

Lysidamus is indeed shown to be even more indecorous in speech than his supposed social inferiors (Slater 2000, p. 66). To Olympio, who complains about being struck "not with an elbow, but with a battering ram" (849), he quips, *at mihi, qui belle hanc tracto, non bellum facit* ("But she doesn't attack me, since I handle her tactfully," 851). Olympio's "ram" can be read as a phallic symbol (and indeed he is dealing with a he-bride), but he simultaneously bemoans the violent character of his "bride" by using a military metaphor. Lysidamus also produces a martial pun by contrasting the near-homonyms *belle* ("tactfully") and *bellum* ("war"); his use of the verb *tractare* – derived from *trahere* ("to drag") – is sexually suggestive, for it implies that he has physically fondled the bride's body. His prurient imagination is moreover perceptible from the subsequent exchange between master and slave:

OLYM. *paene exposuit cubito.*

LYS. *cubitum ergo ire uolt.*

OLYM. She nearly laid me out with her elbow.

LYS. So she wants to get laid. (853)

Lysidamus takes another innocuous comment involving the term "elbow" (*cubito*) and transforms it into a salacious pun featuring the supine of *cubare* ("to recline"). Despite his low social status, therefore, Olympio comes across as less crude than Lysidamus, who constantly steers the conversation toward sex. This role reversal feeds into Plautus's mockery of Roman patriarchs, who, as Lysidamus demonstrates, do not always live up to their strict public *personae* (Russell 2016, pp. 30–34). Despite his ignoble behavior, however, Lysidamus still enjoys a basic measure of dignity on account of his high status. As a result,

even though both men attempt to consummate their marriage with “Casina,” it is Olympio who must recount his encounter in embarrassing detail to Pardalisca:

- OLYM. Oh, it was massive. I was scared that she'd have a sword. I began looking for it. While I'm checking that she doesn't have a sword, I grab hold of a hilt! Yet when I think it over, she didn't have a sword, since that would've been cold.
- PAR. Tell us about it.
- OLYM. But I'm ashamed.
- PAR. It wasn't a radish?
- OLYM. It wasn't.
- PAR. Not a cucumber?
- OLYM. By god I don't know for sure, but it was no vegetable, except that, whatever it was, for sure no wilt had ever attacked it. Whatever it was, it was so full grown. (907–914)

This humor of this question-and-answer sequence stems from its dramatic irony: the audience, having been informed of the deception (814), instantly recognizes the appendage in question as Chalinus's genitalia (Dutsch 2008, p. 175). By unwittingly touching it, therefore, Olympio receives his just comeuppance: he emasculates himself by fondling the very rival whom he had initially threatened to emasculate. This effect is especially pronounced on account of the phallus's “massive” and “full grown” size, which characterizes its owner as hyper-masculine. The sexualized double entendres on phallic weapons and vegetables also make for comic imagery, for they encourage the audience to visualize Chalinus's organ in various shapes and sizes, ranging from the hilt of a sword to a radish and a cucumber.

In contrast to this graphic dialogue, Lysidamus's retreat is described in far more dignified terms. He does not allude to any of the sexual acts he has performed, but instead rejects “Casina” after realizing that “she” is Chalinus: *i in malam crucem!* (“Go to hell!” 977). He also immediately reasserts his heterosexuality by making up with his wife, placating her with a garbled excuse about “Bacchants” and asking for her pardon (977–1003). Lysidamus thus confirms his status as patriarch, a dominant role that he maintains despite the running gag about his same-sex preferences, as embodied not only by Chalinus's complaint that “the old man really has a habit for chasing after bearded men” (465–466), but also by his own flirtatious exchange with Olympio:

- OLYM. My god, you'd be untamable if you were a stallion.
- LYS. How so?
- OLYM. You're too unrelenting.
- LYS. You haven't given me a try anywhere, have you?
- OLYM. May the gods forbid it! (811–813)

By reinvesting Lysidamus into his original position as head of the household, Plautus emphasizes that these exchanges are only jokes. Indeed, the *senex* ends the play by receiving his “walking stick and cloak” (1019), items that are emblematic of his authority and

dominance. Hence, although his power as *paterfamilias* is temporarily dampened by his humiliation, it is not permanently subverted:

At the end of it all they return to those normal relations and there is no expectation that the male aggression or the authority of the *paterfamilias* will be any less obnoxious. Permanent change, however, is not the point; rather it is that purely momentary overthrow of taboos and reversal of roles which mark the Saturnalia of Republican Rome and the similar holidays of people in other times. (MacCary 1974, p. 888)

Indeed, as emphasized at the beginning of this chapter, Plautus's comedies harbor elements of "pure entertainment"; their momentary suspension of social norms, however, still shows regard for Roman values. For these seemingly subversive inversions are always counter-balanced with hierarchies that mirror those of society at large: characters' speech and behavior are ultimately dictated both by their gender and their class, as a result of which high-status figures such as the *paterfamilias* never experience comic humiliation in equal measure to low-status slaves. Plautus takes great pains to maintain this distinction, going as far as to "double" some scenes, most notably Olympias's and Lysidamus's encounters with pseudo-Casina, thus including a bawdy version for the former and a more dignified variant for the latter. Comic technique in Plautus, whether verbal or physical, is therefore defined by self-censorship: even within the topsy-turvy world the playwright creates, a hierarchy of humor dictates the jokes assigned to each character. These distinctions keep the audience laughing, for they ensure that the humor of Roman comedy, though bold, remains unthreatening.

NOTES

- 1 I wish to thank Astrid Khoo for her assistance with various drafts of this chapter and G.F. Franko for revisions of the translations.
- 2 Dickey (2002, p. 311) notes that *animule* is used only by women; its inclusion at the beginning of this litany therefore signifies the switch in character from Olympio to pseudo-Casina. Cf. Dutsch (2008) on gendered speech in comedy. By role-playing as Casina, Olympio unknowingly coaches Chalinus on how to play her character. Hence, his monologue sets up the ironic inversion that occurs when Chalinus imitates Casina so successfully that he deceives even Olympio (see e.g. 843–844).
- 3 All pronunciations discussed assume Classical pronunciation; on which see Allen (1965). This distinction is significant in relation to the "e" sound, which is an open-mid front unrounded vowel [ɛ] in Classical Latin but a close-mid front unrounded vowel [e] in Ecclesiastical Latin.

FURTHER READING

At its simplest, comic technique is divided into the verbal and the nonverbal. Of these, the former has proved more popular with classics scholars than the latter. Henderson (2009) teases out double meanings and ironic implications in Plautus; Fontaine (2010) examines

especially “funny” words. McCarthy (2000) dissects the humor in conversations between *servi callidi* and their masters. For the Terentian material see Karakasis (2005) and Fontaine (2007), with Papaioannou (2014) providing an overview of Terence’s intertexts and comic receptions. For nonverbal comedy see Panayotakis (2005); for stagecraft, Fantham (2002) on actors’ gestures and Moore (2012) on musical accompaniments. Stock scenes exemplify interactions between verbal and nonverbal comedy: on the door-knocking routine see Brown (1995); on eavesdropping and other plot staples, Sharrock (2009). As many of the conventions in Roman comedy are derived from Greek models, compare also Hughes (2012) as well as Revermann (2006, 2014), which discuss comic technique in both Old and New Comedy.

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

Plautus and the Topography of His World

Sophia Papaioannou

“The Circus, then, is in front of my house, where my tricks are to take place”
(*Iam est ante aedis circus ubi sunt ludi faciundi mihi, Mil. 991*).

This line from *Miles Gloriosus* sums up the peculiar interaction between Greek and Roman worlds that distinguishes the politics of topography in the *palliata*. Milphidippa, the cunning slave woman of the courtesan Acroteleutium, enters the stage ready to spearhead the deception of the braggart soldier. Milphidippa acknowledges that she is about to perform a fictitious role (a meta-role) on a stage topographically set not in some Greek city (specifically, Ephesus, the city where the action of the play presumably takes place), but before the Roman Forum.

The Greek term for the event of the dramatic performance, θέατρον, derives from the verb θεάομαι, “to see,” and indicates the spectators’ viewing experience as crucial to the assessment of drama. In contrast, the corresponding term for Roman drama, *ludi scaenici*, situates at the core of the definition the *scaena*, a physical object – the elevated platform especially constructed for the performance of the drama – and by association, also the action hosted on the *scaena*. This realization has a profound impact on understanding the importance of the setting in Roman drama, because it underscores the leading significance of the spatial conceptualization of the Roman dramatic experience (Manuwald 2011, p. 64).

The setting of a dramatic performance must meet two different sets of expectations. First, it comprises the actual setting, or the physical space and its artifacts. The practicalities of staging include both the material construction of the *scaena* that will host all performances of the festival and the physical accoutrements or props that will populate the space, which are specific to the individual performance and are determined by the stage manager of each play. Second and most importantly, it has to remind the spectators and maintain for them through regular statements the illusory awareness that the historical

and topographical moment of a *palliata* is some location in the Greek world and that the characters involved are Greeks – or Greek-like in conduct. This combination of a real and an imaginary setting discloses an intriguing set of possibilities for experimenting with the Roman understanding of what the Greeks defined as theatrical *opsis*.

Opsis, the fifth constituent of ancient theater according to Aristotle (*Poet.* ch. 16), comprises

all non-verbal constituents of ancient theater..., masks, costumes, props, scenography, song and music, theatrical space and the use made of it, and physical surroundings (not just the performance spaces themselves but also such features of the surrounding topography as could be meaningfully exploited by the playwrights).

Besides these physical features, *opsis* includes “a number of additional elements..., such as gestures, stage-directions, attribution of speaking parts, etc.” (Liapis et al. 2013, p. 1; see further see Sifakis 2013; Petrides 2010). Although *opsis* was an inherent element for the definition and the success of drama, the Romans, unlike the Greeks, did not build their first permanent theater until the mid-first century BCE, over a century after the death of Terence and the heyday of the *palliata*. Before that first permanent theater, all dramatic performances in the Roman world were staged on temporary constructions made of wood and especially built for the *ludi*, then taken apart at the end of the festival (on the structure of the *scaena* see Marshall 2006, pp. 49–56; Manuwald 2011, pp. 69–72; Franko 2013, pp. 418–421; Chapter 3 in this volume). This means that we can only speculate what the *scaena* looked like, and how it influenced not only the staging of a play but also the reception of this staging by the spectators. Since the same *scaena* was used for the production of *palliatae*, *togatae*, *praetextae*, and *cothurnatae*, four different types of drama that allegedly required different stage topography, the audience was trained to “see” on stage much more than what was actually represented there.

The temporary *scaena* was minimalistic; in addition to the *pulpitum*, it included a backdrop wall made of wood (the *scaena frons*). This wall was simply decorated, possibly painted, and had three openings that corresponded to the doors of three neighboring houses. If a play required less than three houses, then the audience necessarily ignored the rest of the set decorations. The audience received information on the exact topography they were looking at (for instance, a city street at Athens or another location in the Hellenistic world) from the actors themselves, typically in the opening scenes to the play. The standardized look of the *scaena frons* is succinctly captured in Plautus’s *Menaechmi* 72–76, where the extradramatic prologue that provides the necessary background information to the audience comments on the hypothetical transformation of the fixed setting as one play leads to the next and a different set of characters take the *pulpitum*:

While this play is performed, then, this city here is Epidamnus: when another play is put on, the setting will be different; just as the companies of acting characters who reside in these cities [the *dramatis personae* of the play] customarily change their roles: now here resides a pimp, now a young man, now an old man, now a poor fellow, a beggar, a patron [or king; Gratwick 1993, ad loc.], a parasite, a seer...

The speaker's acknowledgement of the transitory nature of the actors' training to feel equally comfortable in a variety of type-roles also becomes emblematic for the *palliata* genre in general. The remarks at *Menaechmi* 72–76 also suggest how the spectators might approach critically the illusionistic registers and the perception of the action in this malleable materiality of the staging and the even more abstract imaginary reality of the Greek everyday life, thus affecting poetic and theatrical language.

The question of the extent to which Roman and Greek elements in the *fabula palliata* intermingle is bound to permeate any attempt to appreciate the plays of Plautus (and Terence) as commentaries on the actual interests, ideals, and concerns of Plautus's contemporary Roman audience (Handley 1968; Konstan 1983; Segal 1987; Anderson 1993, esp. pp. 1–29; Fraenkel 2007; Petrides 2013). Given that Plautus's plays were composed and staged at a time when Greek literature and possibly Alexandrian poetics were fashioning the formation of Latin literature in multiple literary genres, the interplay of Greek and Roman was inevitable, if not actively sought. Plautus's plays are the earliest extant works of Latin literature that offer the opportunity to study this complex process, which becomes even more sophisticated in light of the several levels of reality constructed in the politics of the dramatic experience. I shall explore some of the various ways in which Plautus comments on this reality and how they influence the formation of the geography of comic action. The incongruities of the faux-Greek setting obviously generate humor, not least through targeted, more or less subtle mockery of foreigners, specifically the prestigious Greeks. Plautus uses the Greek setting and Greek characters speaking Latin in order to create a world that both is and is not Roman, thus contributing to the Romans' increasing preoccupation with self-fashioning or self-definition. On several occasions the fluidity of comic topography encourages complex metaliterary experimentation, through which Plautus displays his familiarity with Alexandrianism in compliance with the demands of erudite members of his audience.

A more detailed study of the complex interaction of Greek topography with Roman setting in the *palliatae* invites a few words on the identity of Plautus's audience. Moore (1998, pp. 9–10) notes that the combination of Greek and Roman elements was meant primarily for those elite among the audience who would be in the position to discern the incongruity in the staging of a Greek character sounding like a Roman by making references to contemporary events at Rome, or to habits and practices common to Rome, etc. For the rest of the spectators, who lacked knowledge of the Greek language and culture, this Greco-Roman fusion was not necessarily problematic, since it would go rather unobserved. Goldberg (1998), although serving different primary goals, reaches nearly identical conclusions regarding the target audience of Plautus's plays. Goldberg has shown that given the small size of Republican theatrical spaces, and the large size proportionally of the available seats reserved for the senators and their families, the majority of the audience of the *palliatae*, including the *aediles* in charge of selecting (and paying for) the plays performed each year at the *ludi*, came from the aristocracy; they were, that is, people fluent in Greek, very well educated, and many of them even familiar with the daily life of a Greek city from personal experience (cf. Gentili 1979, pp. 31–32; Fontaine 2010, pp. 183–187). The intelligent interfusion of Greek and Roman topography (and by extension of Greek and Roman worlds) could also be appreciated by the slaves in Plautus's audience, several of whom, being Greeks, likely were as experienced in and knowledgeable about Greek

Comedy as the most learned of the aristocrats in the hall (Richlin 2018). The ever-evolving nature of the Greco-Roman stage reality of Plautus's *palliatae* and the various levels involved in the interplay of Greek topography and Roman reality are interdependent aspects of the overarching theme of Plautine artistry.

Where in the (Greek) World Are We?

The characters that inhabit the world of the 27 plays of the extant *fabula palliata* are extremely cosmopolitan. Their adventures include travel for a variety of reasons, to a great number of different locations around the Mediterranean world, most of which belong to the Greek geography, but which also include locations in the Italian peninsula and its sphere of political influence (Knapp 1907a,b). The overwhelming majority of these locations are set somewhere in the Greek world, and understandably so, given that all Roman *palliatae* draw on some Greek model. Topographical choices in Plautus, however, often function as a springboard for metadramatic commentary on a variety of issues that are tied to the experience of composing and receiving a multilayered *palliata*.

Lines 7–12 from the prologue to *Menaechmi* provide a key passage for understanding Plautus's comprehension of dramatic topography, or more accurately, “for the theatricality of Plautus's geography” (Moore 1998, p. 58). Plautus begins by stressing that the traditional geographical setting of a *palliata* is the city of Athens, and then notes that he wishes to stray away from this pattern, and locate his play instead somewhere else in the Greek world, specifically Sicily:

*atque hoc poetae faciunt in comoediis:
omnis res gestas esse Athenis autumant,
quo illud vobis graecum videatur magis;
ego nusquam dicam nisi ubi factum dicitur.
atque adeo hoc argumentum graecissat, tamen
non atticissat, verum sicilicissitat.*

And playwrights do this in their comedies: they say that all action takes place in Athens, so that it will seem more Greek to you; as for me, I will say this story took place nowhere except where it is said to have happened. And though this plot is “Greekicized,” nevertheless it is not “Atticized”; rather it is “Sicilicized.”

A careful consideration of the passage discloses a more nuanced picture. Plautus distinguishes himself from the rest of his fellow *palliata* playwrights in displaying what on the surface seems to be a predilection for geographical variation. Even though most of his plays are set in Athens, in several of them his heroes inhabit other locales in the Hellenophone world: specifically, Thebes (*Amphitruo*), Ephesus (*Miles Gloriosus*), some shore of North Africa near Cyrene (*Rudens*), some town in Aetolia (*Captivi*), Sicyon (*Cistellaria*), Calydon in Aetolia (*Poenulus*), Epidamnus (*Menaechmi*), and Epidaurus (*Curculio*). This diversity of topography – over one-third of Plautus's extant corpus is set outside Athens – likely attests to the variety of Greek intertexts: not all New Comedy

dramatists set their plays in Athens, although Athens remains a topographical point of reference even in plays set elsewhere. In *Miles Gloriosus*, for instance, set in Ephesus, Athens is mentioned a total of 18 times, while Ephesus is mentioned only 10. In the prologue the wily slave Palaestrio informs the audience that three of the leading characters in the play – the *adulescens amans*, his beloved courtesan, and the wily slave himself – are from Athens, and once the young lover and his beloved are reunited, all three embark on their return trip to Athens.

Contemporary historical reality is a determining factor for the fluid geography of the *palliata*. As a result of the First Carthaginian War, several of the non-Athenian Greek topographical settings could be identified at the time as both Greek and Roman. The setting of *Rudens* on the shores of North Africa inevitably elicits memories of the Second Carthaginian War, either ongoing or just concluded at the time *Rudens* was first staged (211–200 BCE, according to de Melo 2012, pp. 397–398). The placement of comic action in North Africa acknowledges contemporary historical reality: the gradual Roman expansion all around the Mediterranean in the half century prior to and during Plautus's day, the exposure of the Roman elite to the many facets and versions of Greek culture in its diversely adapted expressions, and the obvious speculations on the definition of what is Greek beyond Greece, or rather beyond Athens.

The cultural discordance between Athenians and non-Athenians is a core theme in *Rudens* and is expressly articulated two-thirds into the plot, when Trachalio, a city-slave from Athens, makes the acquaintance of Daemones and informs him that Palaestra, a girl in the service of the pimp Labrax, is truly a freeborn Athenian (738 and 741). This revelation excites Daemones, who acknowledges in turn that he, too, is Athenian (740–742), not Cyrenian. The common origin of Trachalio and Daemones fittingly serves the legal tactics Trachalio pursues in his dealings with (and at the expense of) the local fisherman Gripus – tactics that point to the “manipulative activities of potential litigants who engage in private arbitration” (Scafuro 1997, p. 163). A metaliterary reading of the pseudo-litigation ruse is tempting: ignorant of Athenian law, Gripus and the pimp Labrax become not just the victims of a ploy but also the audience challenged with the interpretation of a culturally alien practice. In this respect, Gripus and Labrax are no more knowledgeable than the Roman audience of *Rudens* (and vice versa), and thus stage and *cavea* come together in the dramatization of a typical audience-engagement strategy of the Plautine *palliata*. Daemones's juxtaposing his Athenian origin with his residence at Cyrene supports another metaliterary reading. According to this reading, the Athenian Daemones, who has adjusted himself to living in a remote area of the great Hellenistic world but has not essentially assimilated, represents the archetypal New Comedy character who has migrated into the new dramatic setting of the Hellenistic comedy in its various adaptations and transformations (including the *fabula palliata*) all around the Mediterranean.

In *Menaechmi* the geographical setting and its significance are more complex. On the one hand, in this play Plautus makes clear a cultural and generic distinction implicit in his other plays (as just seen in our discussion of *Miles Gloriosus*): he distinguishes the plays set in Athens and mainly inspired by the comedy of Menander (*atticissat*) from plays set in other parts of the Hellenophone world and written by a variety of playwrights from a variety of cultural backgrounds (*graecissat*). Plautus's *Menaechmi*, however, is one that “speaks the Sicilian dialect” (*sicilicissat*). The statement obviously is not a literal one,

since *Menaechmi* is written in Latin; rather, the play “speaks Sicilian” at the level of meta-poetics, for Sicily is metonymically used at least for the Greek mime of Epicharmus from Sicily, and even the Phlyax plays, performances of crude humor, originated in Magna Graecia under the influence of the Sicilian mime and native forms of farcical drama. Fontaine (2010, pp. 8–11) has aptly explicated the fusion of this double Sicilian-Greek plus Southern Greco-Italian farcical tradition within the etymological structure of this otherwise unattested word *sicilicissitat*. This Plautine neologism – and a Latin *hapax* – is translated as “speaks Sicilian,” but only under the influence of the other two verbs, *atticissat* and *graecissat*. In reality the term is a comical nonsense formation. Plautus devised the term by combining a Greek form (σικελίζειν, “speaks Sicilian,” but also more broadly, “acts like a Sicilian,” in the pattern of a mime or a Phlyax play) and the Latin noun *sicilicus* (“Sicilian,” which in turn has two meanings as well, the second of which, the mark noting duplication, is direct reference to the main theme of the play).

I would like to suggest a third avenue of interpretation, which likewise involves the diffusion of the Greek under the influence of the Roman, and is geographically determined because it is governed by the peculiar political situation of Epidamnus at the time of Plautus. Epidamnus, a Greek colony since the seventh century BCE, came under Roman control in 228 BCE. Sicily, likewise, had come under Roman rule a few years earlier, at the conclusion of the First Carthaginian War in 241 BCE. Plautus confronts his audience with a play that involves characters from two territories whose residents in Plautus’s day identify as Greeks in origin and culture but as Romans politically, owing to the increasingly strong Roman influence in the area. The fusion of Greek and Roman worlds on stage, in other words, is a dramatic translation of actual contemporary politics – and Sicily and Epidamnus are only two of the many Greek or Hellenistic territories gradually becoming Roman at the turn of the third and the beginning of the second centuries. (The coastline of North Africa west of Cyrene, the dramatic site of *Rudens*, is another territory falling under this politically borderline category, since it came under Roman influence in the aftermath of the Second Carthaginian War in 201 BCE.) The confusion of identity and worldview thus confronting the elites among the audience, who must have realized that Romanness henceforth would inevitably be tied to the continuous interaction with Greek culture, is reflected in the bilingual pun involved in the pseudo-etymology of “Epidamnus,” from the Greek preposition ἐπί (“to” or “toward,” when it takes the accusative case), and the Latin *damnum* (“loss,” “damage,” “forfeiture,” “harm”), which sounds like the Greek *δαμνος (a potential, yet unattested, form of the verb δαμνέω or δάμνημι; “force, subdue”) – a wordplay consciously promoted by Plautus himself at *Menaechmi* 263–264 and 267. Plautus’s punning implies that the Romans were aware of the ominous sound of the word – an awareness that led them to change the name of the city very soon after Roman interests landed in Illyria, to Dyrrachium; this is the name by which the city was known in Plautus’s day (Plin. *HN* 3.145; Cass. Dio 41.49.3; also Mela 2.56; cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *Epidamnus*). Ironically, the new name the Romans gave the city is Greek, a compound of δυσ- (“difficult, hard, bad”) and ῥαχία (“rocky shore,” *LSJ* II), inspired by the imposing and very steep rocks near Epidamnus – and a small village nearby that already carried the name Dyrrachion. In the context of the Greco-Roman interfusion that governs Plautus’s stage world, the pseudo-etymological Latin pun on Epi-damnus, a Greek name, plays against the change of the very name into another Greek name, which is not a very propitious

one either! Indeed, to Plautus's audience versed in Greek, the pun is not just on the word-play between Epidamnus and *damnum*, but also on the replacement of a Latin-sounding name with a Greek one, which carries an ominous sound as well. In conclusion, the Greek setting in this multilayered pun serves several goals, which, depending on the occasion, may be literary, metaliterary, or cultural, thus summarizing paradigmatically the function of the peculiar interaction between Greek and Roman topography against which Plautus's *palliatae* are set.

When Plautus's Greeks Speak Like Romans, and Its Significance for Their Roman Audience

The peculiar cohabitation of Greek and Roman on the *palliata* stage is manifested in what Moore calls "juxtaposition jokes" (jokes where an emphasis on the Greek setting and often also on the Greek identity of the speakers is paired with references to conspicuous Roman institutions; Moore 1998, pp. 55–65), and in various expressions of "hyper-Hellenization" (references that are excessive, in both number and emphasis, to Greek practices). These self-conscious jokes routinely acknowledge Greece as the land of deceit and introduce the deception plot. Several juxtaposition jokes revolve around the incongruous entwining of Greek and Roman culture and dramatic topography. I shall discuss in this second part of my chapter three representative episodes; specifically, Periplectomenus's construction of a hypothetical married life with practices of Roman everyday habits in *Miles Gloriosus*; the emphasis in *Trinummus* on *mores*, a loaded concept in Republican Roman ideology; and the commentary on Roman topography in the parabasis-like speech of the Choragus in *Curculio*.

The middle of *Miles Gloriosus* features a long dialogue between the *senex* Periplectomenus and the *adulescens* Pleusicles (596–812). Periplectomenus is a *senex lepidus*, an old man who behaves contrary to the paradigm for the comic *senex*, who is typically *iratus* (angry, stingy, and dull). The phrase *senex lepidus*, which does not occur outside the Plautine corpus, is used six times in *Miles*, all applied to Periplectomenus (135, 155, 649–650, 659–660, 725, 731). He describes and defends his unconventional worldview by arguing that his is the lifestyle of the urbanite citizen of Ephesus, which epitomizes the cosmopolitan Greek world, not that of the rustic Italian, epigraphically identified with the hillbilly from the unknown Apulian village of Animula: *post Ephesi sum natus, non enim in Apulis; non sum Animulas* ("I was born in Ephesus, not in Apulia; I am not from Podunk, Italy," 648. *Animula* is a *hapax*; see Lagiola 2005). And yet, only a few lines later, in a most pronounced juxtaposition of Greek and Roman, Periplectomenus explains why he opts not to marry, as he describes the spendthrift habits and the whereabouts of a typical Roman *matrona* of the upper class:

True enough, it is sweet to marry a good wife, if there is a place somewhere on earth where you can find one! But am I to take home one who would never say to me: "Buy me some wool, my dear husband, with which I may make for you a soft and warm cloak, and good winter tunics, so that you may not be freezing this winter"? Such words you cannot possibly hear from a wife; instead, before the cocks crow, she wakes me up and fires orders: "Give me

some money, my dear husband, to offer a present to my mother on the first of the month; give me some money to make preserves; give me some money to give to the sorceress on the feast of Minerva, and to the woman who interpreters the dreams, also to the prophetess and to the psychic; and it is uncivil not to hand a few coins to the woman who tells the future by reading the eyebrows, or not to tip the woman who folds our cloths; and the woman who delivers our food – she has been pestering me for quite some time, because she has not received anything; and should I mention the midwife, who is complaining to me, that we have paid her too little. What! You are not going to pay anything to the nurse who feeds the young slaves in our household?” These and many other expenses of this kind, made by women, make me shudder and stay clear from a wife and orders of this kind. (685–700)

Periplectomenus not only lists a whole series of specifically Roman professions that flourish at the expense of female superstition and spendthrift habits, he also refers to various details exclusive to the daily life of the Roman household, such as the *nutrix* hired for the babies of the household slaves, or the present to one’s mother on the calends of the month, and the axiomatic identification of the virtuous, Lucretia-type matron with one that spends her time spinning wool. The old man prides himself for his Ephesian cosmopolitanism, all the while blaming the women around him for behaving in a way that is too un-Roman!

Next to the regular references to habits and practices of everyday Roman life, the ample use of Roman legal language by Greek characters to describe actions that allegedly take place in Greek territory intensifies the comic effect, renders the plot livelier, and not least strengthens the rapport between actors and audience. Above all, however, the hybrid civic experience thus constructed – neither entirely Greek, nor entirely Roman – maintains an emotional distance on the part of the spectators between stage reality and real life (Gaertner 2013).

In several comedies Roman lawyers and Roman legal practices stand at the center of the comic action, but in no other comedy is Roman law (along with Greek law) so emphatically enmeshed with the plot as in *Trinummus* (see Karakasis 2003 on the legal language). The prominence of law is signaled early in the play in a monologue by the *adulescens* Lysiteles (223–275a, a piece of Plautine originality, according to Leo 1912, p. 117; Fraenkel 2007, p. 425 n. 273), where the advantages of *amor* and *virtus* are colorfully weighted in a mock-court hearing. The lovestruck youth is tormented by a guilty conscience that urges him to follow a very Roman lifestyle of *virtus*, as directed by custom (*mos*). His difficult choice between personal desire and civic duty (230: “Should I go in for love affairs or attend to business?”) becomes a leitmotif throughout the play, marked by the numerous and pervasive references to the theme of *mos* – the Roman *mos maiorum*. From the various moralizing clusters of the play, Slater singles out the scene following the running entrance of the slave Stasimus. In this scene the slave fervently denounces contemporary morals to the *senex* Charmides, in a dialogue where “forms of *mos* occur no less than fourteen times in twenty-seven lines (1028–54)” (Slater 1987, pp. 267–268):

STAS. I wish that people today respected more the good old customs and the good old thriftiness, rather than bad customs.

CHAR. (*aside*) Immortal Gods! This guy actually is about to begin to talk about politics. He longs for the good old customs; you can tell that he loves the good old customs of our forefathers.

- STAS. For, in our days, people's behavior hardly cares for what is proper, only for what is pleasing. Ambition now is sanctioned by custom, and is unrestrained by the laws. By custom, people have full permission to throw away their shields, and to flee before the enemy. By custom, to go up for office presupposes criminal conduct.
- CHAR. (*aside*) A shameless custom!
- STAS. Today, it's become a "custom" to pass over the strongest candidates.
- CHAR. (*aside*) Indeed shocking.
- STAS. Custom has now brought the laws into their power; the laws are now under their control more than parents are under the control of their children! These wretched laws are even hung up against the wall with iron nails, where it would have been much more deserving for the bad customs to hang.
- CHAR. (*aside*) I'd like to go up and talk to this fellow; but I listen to him with too much pleasure, and I'm afraid that if I approach and talk to him, he might begin talking about something totally different.
- STAS. And, for these customs, nothing is held sacred by the law. The laws bend their head before the customs, while customs hasten to sweep away everything, sacred and common property alike. (1028–1045)

This eulogy of *mos* and propriety is particularly entertaining once it is assessed inside the larger corpus of Plautus's overall dramatic production. To the experienced audience of *palliatae*, such a profuse praise of *mores* on Plautus's stage would naturally seem ironic. Subconsciously, however, amidst this humorous reception of Roman law, Plautus has trapped his Greek characters inside Roman civic life. Lysiteles's decision in the end to comply with the norm of Roman civic orthodoxy, which focuses on duty and denounces individual pleasures, may or may not be expected, but Plautus has succeeded in prohibiting his audience from dissociating themselves completely from the "Greek" reality on stage.

A similar dichotomy, between *negotium* and love, determines the plot in *Mercator* – for many scholars the Plautine play closest to its Greek original, Philemon's *Emporos* (Lefèvre 1995, pp. 9–59; Anderson 1993, pp. 37–41; Dunsch 2000). In this play, the *adulescens amans* Charinus has accomplished something unique, to take possession of the object of his love, the girl Pasicompsa, without sustaining some financial ruin – in fact, quite the contrary: the girl was purchased with the extra profit he made from a successful business trip. Upon returning to Athens, however, he is outwitted by his father, a merchant much more experienced and cleverer, who buys the girl for himself, though he allegedly states that he plans to sell her abroad for a nice profit. Charinus reacts in an extreme way: he decides to abandon Athens and his household and travel the world in order to find Pasicompsa. Metapoetically speaking, Charinus defines himself as an *adulescens amans* of a *palliata* only in the context of the exclusive affair with Pasicompsa – he needs to find her in order to retrieve his comic self. Yet his farewell to his fatherland, blaming Athens and her corruptive *mores* for destroying his happiness, is puzzling, unless viewed as a tongue-in-cheek aside by the (Roman) actor to the (Roman) audience, who reminds them of the fundamental convention of the imaginary

reality dramatized on the *palliata* stage; namely, that Athens is the place *par excellence*, where an amatory comedy may be realized:

Penates of my family, father Lar of my household, I entrust to you the wellbeing of my parents, so that you will keep them safe. I will go find myself some other Penates, another Lar, some other city, some other state. I abhor Attica. Actually, in a place where morals grow worse day by day, where you have no way to know who the friends and the faithless are, and where that which pleases your mind the most is snatched away, there, even if a kingdom were given, citizenship is not desirable. (834–841)

By means of this self-conscious comment, the Roman actor behind Charinus allows Roman reality to enter the stage even of the Plautine comedy most closely following its Greek model. The deliberately fluid interplay between Rome and Athens is manifest in the discordance of the critics about the actual location referred to in these lines: Gagliardi (1963, p. 163) and Segal (1987, p. 241 n. 56) argue for Rome; Gruen (1990, p. 154) for “Athens, the vice capital of Hellas;” Dunsch (2000, p. 317 ad 837) for the general “Plautopolis.”

In the middle of *Curculio*, Plautus inserts his closest parallel to the Aristophanic parabasis. In a play set in Epidaurus, the Choragus, an extradramatic character, comes on stage, interrupts the plot, addresses the audience, and gives a speech that instructs them on the topography of the Roman Forum. He identifies specific Roman buildings, monuments, and streets, and he links each of them in a satiric fashion to Roman institutions and professions across the social spectrum:

Anyone who wants to meet a perjurer should go to the *comitium*; if he wants to meet a liar and a braggart he should go to the shrine of Venus Cloacina. Let him look for rich profligate husbands under the walls of the basilica. In the same place will be male prostitutes, and the ones who get promises for money; those who contribute to group meals are at the fish market. At the bottom of the forum good and rich men stroll about; but in the middle, near the gutter, are the pure pretenders. The ones who are arrogant, talkative, and spiteful, who brazenly speak slander against someone else on no grounds, and who have plenty that could truly be said against themselves, are just above the Lacus Curtius. In the shadow of the old shops are those who give and receive money at interest. Go behind the temple of Castor and Pollux: right there are those you would be a fool to trust. In the Vicus Tuscus are the people who sell themselves; on the Velabrum [you can find] a baker [or miller] or a butcher or a seer, or those who themselves cheat or offer others a place where they can cheat. [Rich and married wasters at the house of Leucadia Oppia] But I hear the door creaking: I need to shut up. (470–486; trans. Moore 1998, p. 132, with alterations)

This speech, which opens the second half of this elliptic play (Fantham 1965), blurs the distinctions between dramatic topography (the world of Greek Epidaurus) and the “real world” of Rome (Moore 1991, pp. 343–362, 1998, pp. 126–137; Sommella 2005; Marshall 2006). At the same time, the identification of major comic characters of the *palliata* with representatives of professions and social classes of Plautus’s contemporaries directs the audience to project their own very Roman daily experience onto the action of the play. By this association Plautus communicates explicitly a key idea of his dramaturgical

philosophy: that the imaginary Greek world on stage and the Roman reality of his audience are always to be connected. On the ideological level, Plautus dares his audience to admit that crooks, thieves, and all kinds of deceptive characters are much closer at home, indeed at the stands of the *cavea*, not a phenomenon of the so-considered immoral and corrupt Greek world.

To stay a bit longer in *Curculio*, this message of the ongoing fusion of Greek and Roman topography emanates with notable power and duration throughout the play. I shall limit myself to just two instances. First, in the part of the play prior to the entrance of the Choragus, there is a recurrent violation of the paradigmatic convention of the “creaking door” – a character already on stage loudly notes the creaking sound of a door, which is code for announcing the entrance of a new character on stage (Prescott 1939, p. 5, 1942, p. 17; Petersmann 1971; Tarrant 1978, pp. 246–247; Duckworth 1994, p. 116; Moore 2005; Sharrock 2008, pp. 14–16). A convention rare in Greek tragedy and Old Comedy becomes in New Comedy a distinct mechanism of signaling a character’s entrance on stage. Plautus’s abolition of this mechanism in *Curculio*, a play where he nearly personifies the door as he renders it the addressee of the first Latin *paraklausithyron* (147–155), may be read as a daring attempt to transform the impromptu and minimally decorated – and as such, distinctly *Roman* – stagecraft, a convention designed for the given theatrical physicality of a permanent marble Attic (or Hellenistic) theater and its preset *scaena frons*. This conspicuous absence of the creaking door brings about the disruption of dramatic illusion more effectively and for a longer period of time. The audience now becomes even more conscious of the convention, and they pay attention to every new character-entrance henceforth to see if the door does creak or not. Secondly, just prior to the Choragus intermission, the spectators witness the stormy arrival on stage of the “cunning” parasite Curculio:

Make way for me, known or unknown, while I execute my orders here; get lost all of you, be off, and get out of the way, so that in my speed I’ll not hurt anybody with my head, or elbow, or breast, or with my knee. So suddenly now am I charged with a business of quickness and dispatch, that there’s no person ever so opulent to block my way, neither general, nor a tyrant, nor market inspector, nor district officer nor village chief, their honors so great might be, but he fall down headfirst on from the sidewalk and into the carriage-road. And then those Greeks with their cloaks (*Graeci palliati*), who walk about with covered heads, who walk about weighted down by books and baskets under their cloaks, they loiter together, and engage in gossiping among themselves, those runaway slaves, who stand in your way and block your path; you can always see them enjoying themselves in the hot liquor-shops; when they have scraped up a coin or two, with their heads covered they are drinking mulled wine, solemn, and half-drunk they depart: if I stumble upon them here, from every single one of them I’ll squeeze out a fart from their barley-stuffed bodies. (280–295)

The content of Curculio’s entrance monologue, with the listing of several Greek magistrate offices and its tirade against the idling Greeks who roam about the marketplace and engage in pointless philosophical discussions, reminds the audience once again that the play is set in a Greek location. The likely presence of several Greek slaves among the audience could project the stage reality on the audience’s actual experience, and so eliminate the boundaries of time and space between the worlds of the stage and the spectators.

Yet the potential dramaturgical device to direct the entrance of the actor playing the parasite not through the sides of the *scaena* but down the *cavea* and from amidst the *Roman* audience, as Wiles has suggested, transforms the awareness of the Greek dramatic location from a mere matter-of-fact convention into a play of great comic potential (Wiles 1991, pp. 59–61; Marshall 2006, p. 194). The entrance problematizes the setting of strict limits of the stage space, not just topographically but also geographically.

Conclusion

Fabula palliata, more than the other forms of comic stage drama known to us today from Greek and Roman antiquity, relied on permeability in dramaturgy and staging. This de facto intimacy between the stage world and the world of the audience inspired Plautus's dramaturgical genius. The numerous expressions of metatheatrical interaction became the interface against which he designed his dramatic geography, a “make-believe” Greek city in the heart of very real Rome, inhabited by people who eagerly betray the Roman identity behind the Greek mask as they look for an ingenious way to break the “fourth wall” and strengthen their rapport with the audience. The lack of topographical specificity in Roman comedy, in combination with the lack of permanent stagecraft, became an asset for the Roman comic playwright. The “make-believe” Greek world, even though a given in the *opsis* of the *palliata*, remained fuzzy: the *scaena frons* of the wooden stage revived the Greek New Comedy convention of the Athenian street and the three doors. This conventionality of the New Comedy stage topography, as perceived, received, and transformed by the Roman writers of the *palliata*, becomes a springboard for acknowledging the fundamentality of the ongoing play between dramatic geography (Greek) and physical topography (Latin) as a source for laughter and a display of comic genius.

FURTHER READING

An exclusive and systematic study on Plautine topography is a desideratum. On Rome's topography as a literary construction across times and genres, see Edwards (1996) and, more recently, Larmour and Spencer (2007). Blackman (1969) remains a starting point for the study of the peculiar combination of Greek and Roman topography on the Plautine stage.

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CHAPTER TWENTY

Warfare and Imperialism in and Around Plautus

Paul J. Burton

It would be very strange indeed if the plays of Plautus lacked reference to military matters, since the period of Plautus's creative efflorescence coincided precisely with the largest surge in the growth of Roman power abroad. If the first production dates are reasonably accurate (probably nothing before 206, and certainly nothing after Plautus's death in 184; all ancient dates are BCE unless otherwise noted), Plautus's plays were composed around the middle of the 53-year period (200–167) when, according to the Greek historian of Rome's rise to international power, Polybius of Megalopolis (fl. c. 200–118), “nearly the entire world [fell] under the sole rule of the Romans – something that has never happened before” (1.1.5). The earliest likely datable play, *Miles Gloriosus*, performed c. 206 or shortly thereafter (Sedgwick 1930, p. 105; de Melo 2011b, p. 136), corresponds to the time when P. Cornelius Scipio, soon to be Africanus, had completed the Roman expulsion of the Carthaginians from Spain and was poised to take the war against Hannibal to its conclusion in North Africa. The latest plays were probably performed during the early to mid-180s (Sedgwick 1930, p. 105 on *Truc.*; de Melo 2013, p. 261), corresponding to the time when the Romans had humbled Macedon and its vigorous, expansionistic king, Philip V; contained the vast Seleucid empire of Antiochus III “The Great,” whose nickname was no accident since most of his holdings covered the eastern conquests of Alexander III “The Great”; shored up the tottering Ptolemaic regime in Egypt; and, after a two-centuries-long struggle, cleared the Po Valley of its most belligerent and hostile Celtic tribes. Much of Plautus's audience will have consisted of citizen-soldiers, some on furlough, others about to be shipped out, others just demobilized, and still others veterans whose period of service (16 years maximum, served between the ages of 16 and 46) was over, as well as members of their families.

A perennial scholarly preoccupation in Plautine studies is the attempt to isolate genuinely Roman material from the playwright's Greek source material – to find the authentic

“Plautine Elements in Plautus.” The fact that Eduard Fraenkel’s 1922 book by that title was expanded and translated into Italian by Franco Munari in 1960, and, 46 years after that, into English by Frances Muecke and Tomas Drevikovsky (2007) attests to the ongoing fascination with – and need for – this methodology. Given the chronological coincidence between Plautus’s active years and the sudden surge in Roman international power just outlined, it is perhaps no surprise that several scholars have sought evidence for contemporary responses to Roman imperialism in Plautus’s pages (Harvey 1981, 1986; Gruen 1990, 2013; Franko 1995, 1996; Owens 2000; Starks 2000; O’Neill 2003; Leigh 2004; Burton 2013). In what follows, this evidence will be reviewed and critically assessed across two thematic areas: warfare and militarism, with particular focus on *Captivi*; and representations of the conquered “other,” with particular focus on *Poenulus*.

Throughout the period of Plautus’s professional life, legions of soldiers were constantly being raised and demobilized in and around the city of Rome. During this period, a legion typically consisted of 4200 men, but during emergencies could number anywhere from 5000 to 6000 men (Polyb. 6.20.8; 6000: e.g. Livy 42.31.2). Each legion was accompanied by a roughly equal number of auxiliary contingents raised from among Rome’s Italian allies. The 20 legions that protected the state while Hannibal was still in Italy were reduced to 18 in 205, to 16 in 203, and then to 14 in 201 (Livy 29.11.9, 30.2.7, 27.10, 41.9). Massive numbers of veterans must have been demobilized after the Second Punic War ended in 201. Livy tells us land had to be found for Scipio’s veterans from the African and Spanish theaters of war in Apulia and Samnium (31.4.1–3, 49.4–5); further demobilizations from the Spanish theater followed in 199 (32.1.6), and two legions were demobilized in 194, bringing the total number under arms to eight (34.43.9). In 191, the year Plautus’s *Pseudolus* was first performed, at least 22 500 Roman and allied troops mustered in and around Rome for the wars in Spain, northern Italy, and the East (Livy 35.41.4, 36.2.7–9). After P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica’s consular army marched in his triumph over the Boii in 191, the soldiers, perhaps as many as 10 000 (not including auxiliaries), were discharged (Livy 36.40.14). Rome and its environs were literally teeming with soldiers and veterans during Plautus’s creative lifetime.

It is, therefore, highly likely that a significant proportion of Plautus’s audience consisted of men who had performed, were currently performing, or were about to perform their military service. After all, in any given year, 42–44% of the *iuniores* (17–46-year-old men) were *assidui* (eligible for service), and 18–24% were on active service (Harris 1979, p. 44). Assuming the theater audience was a rough cross section of Roman society, perhaps as many as 40% consisted of *assidui* not on active duty and demobilized *ueterani*, while most of the rest (freedmen, slaves, wives, children, adult daughters, mothers, grandmothers) knew or were related to men of military experience. The only groups untouched by military affairs were *proletarii*, resident aliens, and visitors from abroad. The scene in *Epidicus* (208–215) in which the eponymous character describes streets crowded with discharged soldiers bearing captives and spoils, prostitutes all dressed up, and fathers searching for sons rings true. When *Pseudolus* was performed at the *ludi Megalenses* in early April 191 (according to the Varronian calendar, shortly after the beginning of the consular year, when commands were assigned), there were probably plenty of soldiers in and around the city awaiting their marching orders. According to Brunt, there were 66 000 men under arms that year – the highest number in 20 years (Brunt 1971, p. 424, Table XI). Plautus’s

popularity was almost proverbial both in his lifetime and thereafter, when his comedies were frequently revived. This popularity will have been premised on giving the people what they wanted – tailoring his source material to the expectations, experiences, and prejudices of his audience, the likely majority of which consisted of those experienced (or about to be experienced) in war, and their loved ones. No wonder that the speaker of the prologue in *Captivi* addresses the audience as “best warriors in war” (68), that in *Casina* he urges the audience to “conquer through true bravery, which you’ve done so far” (87–88), that in *Asinaria* he observes that Mars has supported the audience up until now (15), and that in *Rudens*, Arcturus wishes the audience’s enemies to lose heart (82).

Warfare and Militarism

The discourse of warfare and soldiering pervades the actual content of the plays as well. Sosia’s lengthy account of his master’s victory over the Teleboians in *Amphitruo* (203–262) could have come straight out of a Roman historical battle narrative – or indeed a general’s victory speech in a *contio* in the *comitium* in Rome, not far from where the play was performed. A demand for satisfaction (*rerum repetitio*) is delivered and refused; battle lines are drawn; the generals have a last-minute parley; the trumpets sound and a cheer is raised; vows are made to Jupiter; swords clash and spears shatter; the din of battle reaches to the heavens; the bodies of the enemy pile up; the victorious army advances in good order; the commander leads the cavalry charge to victory; the enemy flees; the commander kills the enemy commander in single combat; the battle lasts from morning till nightfall, only darkness putting an end to the fighting; the next day envoys come from the enemy and beg for peace; they surrender themselves and their possessions to the commander.

Such straightforward battle descriptions are rare, however. More commonly, battle imagery is introduced by the playwright to describe the plots hatched by wily slaves. In *Bacchides*, the slave Chrysalus boasts that “It wasn’t worth a blister on one’s feet compared with the way I’ll defeat my master without a fleet and without an army and such a great number of soldiers” (929–930). The entire passage, a riff on the Trojan War, with Chrysalus alternately playing the roles of Agamemnon and Ulysses, is shot through with military imagery. This will have resonated with his audience not simply because of its likely familiarity from the tragic stage (which enhances the humor of Plautus’s text), but also because of the intrinsic interest in the military details of his highly militarized audience. The letters in Chrysalus’s sealed tablet (his Trojan horse, a letter designed to bilk the *senex* Nicobulus out of money) are his “well-armed and brave soldiers” (*milites armati atque animati probe*, 941–942); his cavalry will “charge” (*faciet impetum*, 943) and cause “disaster and destruction” (*exitium excidium*, 944); he “immediately took the spoils with a single blow” (*uno ictu extempulo cepi spolia*, 968–969). There are also references to fire-signaling (939), military planning (940), the besieging (948) and capturing of cities (966), battle (967), the distribution of spoils (971–972), triumphing soldiers (972), and slaying the enemy and selling captives into slavery after storming a city (975–977). The designation of Troy as “Pergamum” (926, 933; cf. 1054; strictly speaking, the citadel, *arx*, of the city of Troy) cannot have been without contemporary relevance,

regardless of its apparent conventionality in Trojan epic narrative (Gruen 1990, p. 150). The kingdom of Pergamum was one of Rome's earliest eastern allies: the Roman proconsul in Greece during the First Macedonian War (215–205), P. Sulpicius Galba, established friendship, *amicitia*, with the Pergamene king Attalus I in winter 209/8 (Burton 2011, pp. 84–85). Elsewhere Plautus even refers to Attalus by name (*Pers.* 339), and, as Fraenkel (2007, p. 12) recognized long ago, “No one doubts that this mention of Attalus is Plautine; this Greek king simply cannot be saved as belonging to the original Greek text.”¹ If, as seems likely, *Bacchides* is late (early 180s: de Melo 2011a, p. 360), then the reference to Pergamum takes on even greater resonance. One of the proximate causes of Rome's war against the Seleucid king Antiochus III “the Great” (191–188) was the king's attacks on Pergamene territory. Indeed, some members of Plautus's audience may have served alongside Pergamene troops at the Battle of Magnesia (189), the Roman victory that ended the war.

Like Chrysalus, Pseudolus in his eponymous comedy casts his clever plan in military language:

I thus prepared all my troops in my breast beforehand, double and triple plots and perfidies, so that whenever I grapple with the enemy – and let me say, confident in the bravery of my ancestors and my own hard work and deceitful wickedness – so that I'll easily win and easily despoil my enemies through my treachery. (578–583)

The reference to the virtue of his ancestors – his *maiores* – has particular resonance in the Roman context, where *mos maiorum*, “the ways of the ancestors,” pervaded Roman consciousness as a guide to action. The humor here flows from the incongruity of placing such Roman shibboleths as the virtue of one's ancestors alongside the morally questionable deceptions, synonyms for which pile up around the former (Hanson 1965, p. 66). Pseudolus's status as a slave – and a Greek one at that – only enhances the absurdity of his professions of ancestral virtue. His plan for tricking the pimp Ballio into releasing his master's son's girlfriend Phoenicium reads uncannily like a historical account of the besieging and sacking of a city:

Now I'll neatly go ballistic on Ballio, this common enemy of mine and all of you. Just pay attention: I want to besiege this town so that it may be captured today. And I'll bring my troops here. (*points to Ballio's house*) If I capture it – I'll make this easy for my fellow citizens – then I'll immediately and without more ado lead my army against this old fortress. (*points to Simo's [his master's] house*) Then I'll load and stuff myself and all my companions with booty, so that they may know that I was born to cause fear and flight for my enemies. I was born of such stock: I'm bound to achieve great deeds that will be regarded as brilliant and long-lasting ever afterward. (584–592)

Again, the emphasis on Pseudolus's ancestry, living up to it, and gaining fame from great deeds in “battle” is significant in the Roman context. The joke conflating the ridiculous and morally questionable (a plan to trick someone) with the serious (exploits in war, living up to and surpassing the great deeds of one's ancestors) would fizzle if such material did not speak to the particular value system of Plautus's Roman audience.

Pseudolus uses the language of the stock character of Greek New Comedy, the swaggering, braggart soldier, the *miles gloriosus*. The extent to which Plautus made this character his own – in response to audience preferences – is a vexed question. As John Hanson (1965, p. 61) pointed out, however, it is not so much the uniquely Roman touches the playwright has added to the character (“the Hellenistic mercenary captain” has been transformed into “the native Roman general turned world conqueror in Plautus’s time”), as the frequency with which Plautus uses him throughout his *oeuvre* (in 7 of 20 extant plays) that should arouse our interest. This must reflect, in part, the tastes of his audience; men who had served as common foot soldiers no doubt saw in the *miles gloriosus* a facet of their own superior officers, and, as in the *carmina triumphalia* sung at triumphs, indulged their appetite for Saturnalian mockery of their commanders. As Peter O’Neill has shown, the “roasting” the victorious general Amphitruo receives upon his return in his eponymous play resembles precisely this phenomenon (O’Neill 2003, and *infra*).

The paradigmatic Plautine *miles gloriosus* is a character in the play by that name, Pyrgopolynices, “Conqueror of Many Fortresses.” His role is surprisingly incidental to the plot (he appears only in the first and last acts), and so the choice of him as the blocking character for the lovelorn hero, Pleusicles, is significant in terms of audience preference (Hanson 1965, p. 55). This blustering braggart likes to be reminded of victories he never won and body counts he never achieved; he is imperious, overbearing, and completely un-self-aware; an easily duped buffoon and, in the end, a craven coward who would do anything to avoid a beating. He is, in the words of his slave Palaestrio, “boastful, brazen shit that he is, full of perjury and adultery ... utterly ridiculous” (*gloriosus, impudens, stercoreus, plenus periuri atque adulteri ... is deridiculo est*, 89–92). The play was written and probably performed at a time of high anxiety among the Romans (c. 206), with Hannibal still in Italy and his brother Mago poised to reinforce him. The audience was anxious, if the speaker of the prologue’s exhortation to them to pay attention “so that Salus may preserve you” (128) is any indication. Such anxieties prompted the importation of the Great Mother goddess, embodied in a stone, from Pessinus in Anatolia (Burton 1995). The language of the *senex* Periplectomenus when he elicits the slave Palaestrio’s help is couched in terms of a military emergency – *subitaria* (225). “The enemy is upon you and the siege is at your back” (219), says Periplectomenus, and urges the slave to use a flanking maneuver to trap the enemy into a siege, cut off their channels of reinforcement and supply, and open up their own. Such material must have had an impact on those in the audience, having recently experienced Hannibal’s brother Hasdrubal’s attempt in 207 to reinforce the Carthaginians in Italy, and Mago’s similar attempt, between 206 and 202, at the time of the play’s first performance.

Postwar scenarios, particularly triumphs, are depicted prominently in the plays as well, as Fraenkel noted. It is worth looking closely at the language and syntax (in bold) of these triumphal passages. Upon his return to Thebes, the hero of *Amphitruo* proclaims:

*edepol me uxori exoptatum credo **aduenturum domum,**
quae me amat, quam contra amo, praesertim **re gesta bene,**
uictis hostibus: quos nemo posse superari ratust,
eos auspicio meo atque [in]ductu primo coetu uicimus.
certe enim med illi expectatum optato uenturum scio.*

By god, I believe my wife longs for my return home. She loves me and I love her in return. Especially after this matter was well done and the enemy conquered. No one believed they could be overcome, but we conquered them in the first encounter under my auspices and leadership. Yes, I know for certain that that woman is wishing and waiting for me to come. (654–658)

A little later on, Jupiter, disguised as Amphitruo, says:

*iube uero uasa pura adornari mihi,
ut quae apud legionem uota uoui si domum
rediissem saluos, ea ego exsoluam omnia.*

But bid clean vessels to be prepared for me
so that I can fulfill all the vows I vowed when I was on campaign
if I should return home safely. (945–947)

In another triumphal passage, this time from *Persa*, Toxilus the wily slave reports:

*hostibus uictis, ciuibus saluis, re placida, pacibus perfectis,
bello extincto, re bene gesta, integro exercitu et praesidiis,
quom bene nos, Iuppiter, iuuisti, dique alii omnes caelipotentes,
eas uobis gratis habeo atque ago, quia probe sum ultus meum inimicum.
nunc ob eam rem inter participes diuidam praedam et participabo.*

Now that the enemies are conquered, the citizens safe, the state tranquil, the peace treaties concluded, the war over, the matter well done, the army and garrisons intact, since you aided us well, Jupiter, and all the other gods powerful in heaven, because I have been properly avenged against my enemy. Wherefore I shall now divide and share the booty among my companions. (753–757)

As Fraenkel (2007, p. 163, followed by Gruen 2013, pp. 602–603) recognized, these passages resonate with the language of the solemn prayer of thanksgiving (*gratulatio*) uttered by the *triumphator*, the steps to total victory expressed by a series of asyndetic ablative absolutes. They find historical parallels in the triumphal tablet of Ti. Sempronius Gracchus in 174, which Livy quotes in full:

*re publica felicissime gesta atque <sociis> liberates, vectigalibus restitutis, exercitum salvom
atque incolumem plenissimum praeda domum reportavit; iterum triumphans in urbem
Romam rediit.*

Public affairs having been very successfully managed and the allies set free, the revenues restored, he brought the army home safe and sound and enriched with booty; for the second time he returned in triumph into the city of Rome. (41.28.8–9, trans. Drevikovskiy and Muecke)

The authenticity of the tone and content of Livy's report is confirmed by epigraphic evidence. After his victory over the Achaean League and destruction of Corinth in 146, Mummius dedicated a temple to Heracles using similar formulaic language:

L. Mummi(us) L. f. Co(n)s(ul) duct[u] / auspicio imperioque eius / Achaia capt[a] Corinto / deleteo Romam redieit / triumphans ob hasce / res bene gestas quod / in bello voverat / hanc aedem et signu[m] / Herculis Victoris / imperator dedicat.

Lucius Mummius, consul, son of Lucius. Under his leadership, auspices, and command Achaia was taken and Corinth destroyed. He then returned to Rome and celebrated a triumph. In recompense for these successful achievements, as commander he dedicated what he had vowed in war, this temple and this statue of Hercules the Victor. (*CIL* 1² 626, my trans.)

There are further echoes of the Plautus passage in the prayer of Scipio (the future Africanus) as he was about to sail to Africa from Sicily in 205. The prayer uses the same language as the prayer of thanksgiving, which it anticipates:

Diui diinaeque ... qui maria terrasque colitis, uos precor quaesoque uti quae in meo imperio gesta sunt, geruntur, postque gerentur, ea mihi, populo plebique Romanae, sociis nominique Latino qui populi Romani quique meam sectam, imperium auspiciumque terra mari amnibusque secuntur, bene uerruncent, eaque uos omnia bene inuuetis, bonis auctibus auxitis; saluos incolumesque uictis perduellibus uictores, spoliis decoratos, praeda onustos triumphantesque mecum domos reduces sistatis; inimicorum hostiumque ulciscendorum copiam faxitis; quaeque populus Carthaginensis in ciuitatem nostram facere molitus est, ea ut mihi populoque Romano in ciuitatem Carthaginensium exempla edendi facultatem detis.

Gods and goddesses who inhabit the seas and lands, I beg and beseech you that whatever has been done, is being done, and will be done under my command may turn out well, and that you prosper them all and make them grow with good growth for me, the Roman people and the plebs, the allies, and the allies of the Latin name who by land, by sea, and by rivers follow the lead, the command, and the auspices of myself and the Roman people; that when the enemy has been defeated, you bring the victors home with me safe and sound, adorned with spoils, laden with booty, and in triumph; that you grant the opportunity to avenge opponents and enemies; and that you grant the Roman people and me the power to do to the Carthaginian state as an example whatever the Carthaginian people attempted to do against our state. (*Livy* 29.27.2–4)

Several formulae (corresponding to the elements emboldened in the Latin text of *Persa* quoted above) are worth noting here. First, the statement that the enemy has been vanquished (*hostibus uictis*) in both Plautus passages finds a historical parallel in Scipio's prayer (*uictis perduellibus*), and in Mummius's dedication (*Corinto deleteo*). The reference to Roman success (*re bene gesta*), also in both Plautus texts, appears in Ti. Sempronius Gracchus's triumphal tablet (*re publica felucissime gesta*), Scipio's prayer (*quae ... gesta sunt ... bene uerruncent*), and Mummius's dedication (*res bene gestas*). The explicit emphasis on the general's right to a triumph – so Mummius's claim that he acted under his own leadership, auspices, and independent command (*dictu, auspicio imperioque eius*), and Scipio's that his achievements were carried out *in meo imperio* and *imperium auspici-umque* – appears in *Amphitruo* (*auspicio meo atque [in]ductu*, “under my auspices and leadership,” 657). The safe return home with an intact army, appearing in all three historical texts (*exercitum saluom atque incolumem ... domum reportauit* [Gracchus]; *saluos incolumesque ... mecum domos reduces* [Scipio]; *Romam redieit* [Mummius]), is alluded to in both *Persa* (*integro exerticu*), and *Amphitruo* (*aduenturum domum*). It is made even

more explicit in Plautus's *Bacchides* (1071): *domum reduco integrum omnem exercitum*, "I'm leading back home the whole army intact." Such comings and goings from and to war will have resonated with a large number of Plautus's audience (O'Neill 2003, p. 9). The mention of a vow made on the battlefield in the Mummius inscription (*in bello uouerat*) appears in similar form in *Amphitruo* (*apud legionem uota uoui*). The thanks to Jupiter and all the other gods powerful in heaven are paralleled by the request of Scipio that "gods and goddesses who inhabit the seas and lands" prosper the Roman cause (*diui diuinaeque ... qui maria terrasque colitis, uos precor quaesoque uti ... eaque uos omnia bene iuuetis*). As in the *Persa* (*sum ultus meum inimicum*), Scipio's prayer emphasizes vengeance against the enemy (*inimicorum hostiumque ulciscendorum*). Finally, the reference to abundant enemy spoils in *Persa* (*praedam*, 757) recurs in several plays (*praedam ... praeda*, *Men.* 134–135; *plurima praeda onustum*, *Rud.* 910; *praeda onustus*, *Bacch.* 1069). The historical parallels use precisely the same language: *exercitum ... plenissimum praeda*, "the army enriched with booty," in Gracchus's tablet, and *spoliis decoratos, praeda onustos*, "adorned with spoils, laden with booty," in Scipio's prayer.

Such language would have been dinned into the ears of the Roman public on a regular basis, either before a general left on campaign, or after he returned in triumph. The language of the plays thus reflects a predominant public discourse of victorious warfare, vengeance, and spoliation. At the same time, however, that discourse drew upon the demotic and unpretentious language typical of daily life, and of the comic stage. But only to a degree. As Gruen has recently pointed out (2013, p. 603), Toxilus's emphasis on the establishment of peace, order, and the end of war is strangely absent from the *comparanda* detailed here, and may echo common sentiments uttered outside the contexts of victorious generals' proclamations during this period, reflecting the Romans' pride in the major accomplishment of establishing (relative) peace throughout the Mediterranean.

One final observation on the triumphing slave: in *Bacchides*, Chrysalus, who represents himself as Agamemnon and Odysseus fighting against Troy (that is, the *senex* Nicobulus), remarks, once his operation has been successful:

This is carrying through one's undertakings beautifully: just as it has turned out for me to go in procession celebrating an ovation (*ouans*) and loaded down with booty. Now that safety is ours and the city's been captured through a trick, I'm leading the whole army home intact. But, spectators, don't be surprised now that I'm not holding a triumph: that's too common (*peruolgatum*), it concerns me not. But even so, my soldiers will be received with honeyed wine. Now I'll bring all this plunder to the quaestor straightaway. (1068–1075)

In addition to the emphasis on the safe return of the army loaded with spoils, as in many of the passages just examined, here the use of *ouans*, as Gruen (1990, p. 137) has pointed out, is a reference to the celebration of a lesser triumph, an *ouatio*, a common enough occurrence during Plautus's active years as a playwright. But what of the triumphs that Chrysalus says are "too common" (*peruolgatum*)? Fraenkel (2007, p. 162) believed that the statement was metatheatrical; that is, it referred to the comic trope, often used by Plautus himself, of the triumphing slave. The playwright, through Chrysalus, was saying that he would not insert here, as the audience expected, the usual triumphal procession by the slave, since such scenes were "too common." Gruen, however, argues that this is a

reference to “triumph-hunting,” the practice, increasingly common during Plautus’s active years, of laying claim to triumphs by generals on ever flimsier grounds as an attempt to level the playing field between themselves and the great vanquishers of Hannibal, Philip V, and Antiochus III. Both readings, of course, were available to Plautus’s audience.

The reference to the booty, duly brought to the quaestor for appropriate deposition into the state treasury, had contemporary resonance as well. Deference to senatorial authority by Chrysalus, doing things by the book and keeping everything aboveboard (despite the trickery involved in securing the booty), would avoid the sort of trouble the Scipio brothers – Lucius and Publius (Africanus) – found themselves in in 187, when they were charged with misappropriation of 3000 talents taken from Antiochus III. In that trial, Africanus prevented his brother from opening up his account books by tearing them up, and then going into self-imposed exile. Historicizing readings, like Gruen’s, amplify and reinforce traditional literary readings, like Fraenkel’s, thus enriching our understanding of the play in context and underscoring the contemporary theater audience’s deep personal experience of war and its aftermath.

Warfare and Contemporary Politics

Further analysis demonstrates that the plays are thoroughly saturated with the specific political discourse of Plautus’s time and place. *Captivi* provides a case in point. Based on circumstantial evidence, the play may have been written and/or performed any time between 193 and 189. There is a reference to the Cisalpine Celtic tribe, the Boii (888), with whom the Romans fought a long and bitter war in the 190s. It ended in 193, and in 191, the triumphing general, P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica (cousin of Africanus), no doubt paraded Boian *captivi* before the Roman public. A reference to Placentia (162), a Roman colony attacked by the Boii in 200, could allude to its resettlement in 190 by Nasica. Other possible contemporary references include a naval triumph (164), perhaps alluding to the naval triumph of L. Aemilius Regillus in 189, and Tyndarus’s condemnation to working in a quarry (723–738, etc.) may reflect a punishment inflicted on Aetolian leaders in 190 (Livy 37.3.8; see Wellesley 1955; Franko 1995, pp. 169–170).

The allusion to the Aetolian leaders is important since the *Captivi* is set in Aetolia. If the play can be dated to the late 190s or 189, then, as Franko (1995, p. 170) suggests, “Plautus may have staged a play set in Aetolia with a war against the League imminent, or even in progress.” Franko argues that the moral universe of the play is distinctly Roman in that it is an exploration of the peculiarly Roman concept of *fides*, “good faith,” “trust,” or “loyalty.” The absurdist humor of the piece emerges from the fact that these Greek characters, who are carrying on fine-grained, nuanced – and, it must be said, very accurate – discussions of the nature of *fides* and its obligations up and down the status ladders of the various social relationships in Rome (master–slave, patron–client, father–son, friend–friend), are doing so in *Aetolia*, “home of a notoriously perfidious bunch of Greeks and quite possibly enemy territory at the time [of the play]” (Franko 1995, p. 167). The rocky Roman relationship with the Aetolian League disintegrated quite rapidly in the later 190s after the Second Macedonian War. Their reputation for *perfidia*, at least in the Roman mind, originated in their making peace with Philip V in 206 without consulting

the Romans, in direct contravention of their treaty with Rome, struck in 211. After the Second Macedonian War (200–196), the Aetolians were disgruntled over the Roman settlement with Philip V. Their resentment led them to summon Antiochus III in 192 to free the Greeks from Roman tyranny, thus touching off two Roman wars, one against the king, and the other against the Aetolians themselves, the latter lasting from 191 to 189. Polybius, as an Achaean League statesman, was naturally predisposed to despise the Aetolians, and his bias infects all our pro-Roman accounts in this period. Nevertheless, given the Aetolians' notorious reputation for lack of *fides* (Livy 31.1.9, 32.32.14–16, 33.35.9, 35.33.4) and greed for plunder (Polyb. 4.3.1, 16.2), among many other vices, it must have struck the audience as incredibly ironic – and funny – that Plautus constructed his Aetolian characters, particularly Hegio, so sympathetically. Aside from being a paragon of civic virtue (Franko 1995, pp. 172–173), he is the very antithesis to the stereotypically greedy Aetolian: he hates gold and believes that profit corrupts (325–328).

Matthew Leigh (2004, pp. 57–97) correctly identifies a darker theme in the play, which perhaps resonated more viscerally with Plautus's audience. He suggests that the plot echoes contemporary controversies in Rome over the repatriation of Roman prisoners of war via *postliminium*. The playwright's sympathies, Leigh argues, are firmly with the common people, who wanted their sons, brothers, and fathers brought home and restored to citizenship. The senatorial establishment was ideologically opposed to this, since it removed an important deterrent against Roman soldiers surrendering too readily or fleeing battle rather than fighting to the death, which was demanded by the prevailing Roman ideology of warfare that was drummed into the heads of recruits during basic training and in their commanders' exhortations before and during battle. Contrary to senatorial policy, T. Quinctius Flamininus authorized the liberation of 1200 Roman captives (survivors of the Battle of Cannae over 20 years before) in Greece in 197 (Plut. *Flam.* 13.5–9; Livy 34.50.3–7), and in 189, the praetor Q. Fabius Labeo liberated 4000 Roman and Italian captives from slavery on Crete (Livy 37.60). Some of these men may have been in Rome, and indeed in the audience when *Captivi* was first performed. The standard clause demanding back prisoners of war and deserters in peace treaties ending Rome's recent wars (e.g. Polyb. 15.17.3) probably resulted in hundreds, if not thousands, of men transported to Italy hoping for official repatriation via *postliminium*. The audience, at the very least, would have included the tent-mates, mothers, wives, and siblings of these men, anxiously awaiting word of their fate. There would also have been soldiers about to be shipped out to or recently returned from war in the audience. On their minds, doubtlessly, were the "precarious boundaries" separating "free and unfree" in their world (Leigh 2004, p. 58). They were keenly aware that their lives and status could be transformed in an instant in the chaos of battle.

Warfare and Cultural Politics

The likely association with a recent Roman war that the Aetolian setting of *Captivi* will have conjured up in the minds of Plautus's audience raises the issue of the cultural politics of the plays. Although the actors themselves were speaking Latin, the plays were not *togata* but *palliata* – Greek characters acting out Greek stories in Greek settings. As I have

argued elsewhere (Burton 2013), the Plautine scripts are rich in information surrounding the ethnographic imagination of the Romans under the impact of increasing contacts with the wider Mediterranean world in the period of Rome's largest overseas expansion (264–167). This is not the place for a full analysis of this material (see further Chapters 19 and 21). In the context of this paper, however, it is important to note that the Roman laughter directed at foreign behavior in the plays is, in part (given the likely martial makeup of the audience), a form of cultural warfare. The dehumanization of “the Other,” especially one with whom a state is or has recently been at war, is a psychological strategy employed to justify and apologize for aggression.

The most appropriate starting point is *Poenulus*, since Plautus's active years as a playwright overlapped in their early stages with the existential threat to Rome posed by Hannibal (and his brothers Mago and Hasdrubal) in the Second Punic War. Given this context, there is much in the play that we would expect to see. The title itself is a put-down: by changing the title of his Greek original (*Karchēdonios*), he has replaced a “fairly neutral civic tag” with a “pejorative ethnic tag,” and added an insulting diminutive for the fully-grown Carthaginian man who is the focus of the play, Hanno (Franko 1996, p. 428; cf. Starks 2000, p. 167). The prologue emphasizes Hanno's Punic qualities, his deceitfulness and lust, as evidenced by his method of searching for his daughters: he tours the brothels of the Mediterranean, pays the fees, has sex with the whores, and only then quizzes them about their backgrounds (104–113) – potential incest, apparently, be damned.² At the play's end, after the identity of his daughters has been revealed, his overenthusiastic embracing of them is confused by the *miles* Antamynides with a ménage à trois getting underway. Hanno's appearance is “colorful” (Franko 1996, p. 430), to say the least: his tunic (unbound and without a *pallium*, or cloak, over it, suggesting, to a Roman audience, effeminacy: Franko 1996, pp. 432, 44) makes him look like a purple bird (*avis ... gugga*, 975). Elsewhere Hanno is denigrated as a passive homosexual (*cinaedus*, 1318) and a tavern-boy (*puer cauponius*, 1299, implying effeminacy: Franko 1996, p. 444), is negatively contrasted with “real” men (1311), and may be the target of Antamynides's slur, *mulier*, “woman” (1305). Hanno's (male) companions are mocked for their earrings (978–981), also a sign of effeminacy. Never far from the surface, of course, is the ancient slur of *Punica fides*, which, in the minds of Plautus's audience, is a virtual metonymy for *mala fides*, “bad faith.” After it is suddenly revealed that Hanno can speak Latin, a torrent of abuse from the slave Milphio follows: he is “a swindler and a trickster ... a double-tongued creature, with a forked tongue like a creeping beast” (*sycophantam et subdolum ... migdilix, bisulci lingua quasi proserpens bestia*, 1033–1035; cf. *subdulus*, 1108; *praestrigiator*, “great trickster,” 1125). Such abuse will have had special resonance with Plautus's audience, many of whose members had been convinced by Roman politicians a few decades earlier that perfidious Carthaginian treaty-breaking justified a declaration of war. Some of the audience would have both voted for and served in the war. The dehumanizing stereotype of Punic effeminacy, therefore, explains the Carthaginian defeat in the Second Punic War (and, indeed, in the First Punic War and in the Sardinian crisis in 238/7), while *Punica fides* both explains their defeat and justifies Rome's aggressive stance toward them.³

On the other hand, there is much to sympathize with in the characterization of Hanno. He is a tragic, quixotic figure. He has lost three children to kidnappers, and though his

method of searching for his daughters is unorthodox, the fact that he is spending all his money and time on an almost hopeless task ennobles him. When the family is finally reunited at the end of the play, the audience is meant to share in their joy. One of the major themes of the play is *pietas* – the peculiarly Roman sense of “duty,” here, toward family members – and its spokesman and greatest manifestation is Hanno (Franko 1996, pp. 435–443). Hanno is also an expert in Roman law, demonstrating his understanding of a *uindicatio in libertatem*, the contestation of a free person’s slave status; *in ius uocare*, the summons to court; his need, as a foreigner at Rome, to appoint a *patronus*; and the procedure for summoning witnesses (Franko 1996, pp. 446–450).

It is therefore not surprising that some modern scholars have been impressed (perhaps excessively so) by *Poenulus*’s precocious liberalism – its unusual “liberal and cosmopolitan premises” (Gratwick 1982, p. 94). On this view, the sympathetic portrayal of a Carthaginian family in the post-Hannibalic War period – set in faithless Aetolia, no less, and while Hannibal was still alive and at large – would be akin to “a play dealing sympathetically with the Germans and Japanese ... in Britain in the early fifties” (Gratwick 1982, p. 94). Gratwick claims that “The portrayal of Hanno is wholly (if disparately) sympathetic, and there is no trace of xenophobia [which] tells us something ... of the openmindedness of his audience” (Gratwick 1982, p. 94). De Melo (2012, p. 12) asserts that “the play contains practically no racial or ethnic slurs.” Gruen (2011, p. 128; 2013, p. 609) contends that Plautus uses the character Hanno as a means of “parodying purported Punic practices while puncturing Roman prejudices,” and (2013, p. 609) “The persons who cast nasty aspersions upon Hanno are the more despicable characters in the play: the scheming slave and the swaggering soldier.” Starks would seem to agree: “Once the bigots of the play express their prejudice, those prejudices are turned against them with no ultimate effect on Hanno” – and “indeed the strongest ethnic jokes appear [where] Hanno fails to conform to anticipated Punic ethnic behaviors and, in fact, often behaves like a stereotypical Roman” (Starks 2000, pp. 164, 165).

This is satire, however, and much like Archie Bunker, the bigoted character at the center of the famous 1970s American television show *All in the Family*, the slave Milphio is also clearly sympathetic: he is the stereotypically likable *servus callidus*, “tricky slave,” trying to help his lovelorn master win the girl; that is to say, to bring about the stereotypically happy ending the audience desires. Besides which, Milphio, in the end, colludes with Hanno in tricking the pimp Lycus. The other character guilty of racist abuse, Antamynides, although not as heroic as Milphio, given that he is a stock bloviating braggart soldier, is quite incidental to the main action, having only an inconsequential scene at the end of Act Two. More important, however, is the fact that in the scene where he abuses Hanno, as soon as he is disabused of his misperception of Hanno’s embrace of his daughters, he joins the group to bring down the pimp (1326–1329) – and later, he even abjectly apologizes to Hanno for abusing him earlier (1411–1414; *Poenulus* is, therefore, certainly not akin to Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Mikado* as Starks 2000, p. 181, would have it). Some sympathy, then, even accrues to the *miles gloriosus*, a rarity in the comedies. Franko (1996, p. 425) is therefore probably correct in arguing that “our present-day preoccupations with magnanimous pluralism” should not dominate our interpretation of the *Poenulus*, or of Plautus’s audience’s reception of the play, which, alongside “cosmopolitan elements,” also includes “powerful images of xenophobia and ethnocentrism.” Perhaps it is safest to

conclude that “Plautus’s – and his audience’s – encounter with the adversarial Other was neither simple nor one-dimensional” (Burton 2013, pp. 108–109).

Plautus engages with the Greek Other in similar ways, but these are complicated by the fact that his source material is Greek, and the characters’ identity as Greeks or Romans is never stable. As has been argued elsewhere (Burton 2013, p. 109), “the plays and characters ‘become Roman and stay Greek,’ or, more precisely, stay Roman but become Greek.” The most common Greek cultural markers in the plays are frivolity and immorality – a stereotype easy to deploy, given their recent subjection to Roman sway under the strictures of the Roman “freedom of the Greeks” policy. *Pergraecari* (“to play the Greek”) and related words are terms of abuse in the plays, usually signifying a frivolous and self-indulgent lifestyle (*Bacch.* 813; *Mostell.* 22, 64, 960; *Poen.* 603; *Truc.* 88; cf. Gruen 1990, pp. 153–154). Some of Plautus’s shady characters even speak Greek, perhaps reflecting the street slang of an increasingly cosmopolitan Rome.

Sometimes the plays echo contemporary critiques of Greek philosophers, as Curculio does in his eponymous play (288–294; quoted in Chapter 19, [p. 16]). Plautus’s contemporary Cato the Elder made a similar mocking observation about philosophers, comparing them to “mere winding-sheets” or “funerary dirges” (Gell. *NA* 18.7.3). The Cynics come in for a drubbing by the parasite Saturio in the *Persa*:

It is right proper that a parasite should be a poor Cynic; he should have a bottle, a scraper, a bowl, slippers, a cloak (*pallium*), and a wallet, and in it small protection to entertain his own household. (123–126)

Plautus also makes fun of the Greek institution of the *palaestra*:

What am I afraid of, you ask? That I, a young man, should enter a gymnasium (*palaestra*) of this sort where one sweats away losses? Where I’d take a debt instead of the discus, shame instead of running? Where someone else would put a jug in my hand instead of a boxing-glove?

...

Where I’d take a turtle-dove instead of the sword, a wine-bowl instead of a helmet and a plaited garland instead of a crest, where I’d take dice instead of the spear and an effeminate cloak (*pallium*) instead of my breastplate, where a bed would be given to me instead of a horse, and where a strumpet would be lying with me instead of a shield? Away from me, away! (*Bacch.* 66–73)

It is tempting to see here in the young hero Pistoclerus’s rant against the *palaestra* an implicit contrast between Greek and Roman notions of acceptable activities for young men. There is certainly nothing preventing us from believing that the militarized Roman audience may have seen things this way. The point of all this is to justify – and account for – Rome’s superior position over the Greeks during the expansion of Rome’s *imperium* in the East. Were they more masculine and focused on martial activity, maybe they would not have fallen under Roman sway. The plays are peppered with criticisms of the morality of “this place” (*hic*, *Trin.* 28), usually Athens, where, to the status-conscious Roman, such shocking and taboo practices take place: “And don’t be surprised at this – that mere slaves drink, make love and banquet – these things are allowed at Athens” (*Stich.* 446–448).

The crude stereotyping of Greeks and Greek locations is complicated and confused by the fact that these are (mostly) Roman actors depicting Greek characters in Greek dress inhabiting Greek locales reading from a Latin script based on Greek originals. So Curculio, who, as noted above, rails against “those Greeks in their *pallia*,” would have done so wearing the Greek *pallium* himself. Perhaps it is the case that there is a double meaning in such passages: “Athens” (as well as other Greek places) becomes, briefly, a metaphorical Rome, and the seemingly self-loathing Greek characters become, briefly, Romans, commenting on Greek manners and lifestyle.

And yet it is tempting to see in all this as well the “Archie Bunker effect”: the broad Hellenophobic stereotyping lampoons mainstream Roman anti-Greek racism of the crudest type. As has been suggested elsewhere (Burton 2013, p. 111), perhaps a “cultural cringe” interpretation is also available: the sophisticated, self-deprecating humor of the Greek characters exposes and subverts the Romans’ own broader and coarser sense of humor. This interpretation may find support in the uncontentious view that *barbarus* and related terms in Plautus are code for “Roman” or “Italian” (Gruen 1990, p. 155). Roman/Italian body odors, food, agricultural practices, dancers, building methods, and legal practices are all mocked in the plays. Apulians are untrustworthy bumpkins; Praenestini are rustics whose language is barely understandable. A poet, likely Naevius, is called a *poeta barbarus*, while the prologues of two of Plautus’s plays assert that Plautus *uortit barbare*, “translated [the play] into the barbarian tongue” (*Asin.* 11; *Trin.* 19). This points to another possible reading, in addition to the “Archie Bunker effect” and the “cultural cringe” interpretations: the toying with barbarism signifies Roman cultural confidence, a complete indifference to insulting remarks made to a predominantly Roman audience by Greek characters on stage.

Conclusion

All these readings were available to Plautus’s diverse audience. The Roman audience, like all such audiences, filtered and internalized the plays in different ways, according to their personal experiences. Depending on their dominant identities – citizen-soldiers, the urban poor, non-Roman freedmen, foreign merchants and traders, the Roman elite – audience members could all enjoy the plays in different ways and on different levels. The material examined in this paper had particular appeal to Plautus’s martial constituency – those Roman citizens with current and past experience of war, those about to have it, and their families.

NOTES

- 1 With Olympian self-assurance, Fraenkel (2007, p. 291 n. 29) rejects as “unlikely” the thesis that when the slave in *Aulularia* proclaims “I am that famous king Philip” (704), the audience might think of the contemporary ruler of Macedonia and two-time Roman foe, Philip V – despite the fact that Fraenkel (2007), pp. 28, 41) believes this to be a Plautine insertion into the playwright’s exemplar.

- 2 Franko (1996, p. 429); I disagree with de Melo (2012, p. 12), who challenges the idea that *ducit noctem* (108), “to spend the night,” requires sexual activity, and who argues, in direct contradiction to the text, that “presumably Hanno made his inquiries before sleeping with the girls” (*ducit noctem, rogitat postibi*: 108 [my emphasis]). The latter is pillow talk.
- 3 See now Isaac (2004, pp. 326–333), although I cannot agree with his conclusion, based on the material presented here, that the Punic stereotype excluded effeminacy; Gruen (2011, pp. 122–140), although I cannot agree with his conclusion, based on the material presented here, that the stereotype of *Punica fides* only became a defining aspect of the Roman attitude in the late first century.

FURTHER READING

In addition to the items already cited, Richlin (2005) is an amusing recasting of *Poenulus*, *Persa*, and *Curculio* in modern dress with reference to contemporary (at least as of 2005) current events. Some insights into this topic appear in Anderson (1993), Habinek (1998), Moore (1998), and the perennially useful Segal (1987).

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CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Religion in and Around Plautus

Seth A. Jeppesen

Introduction: Text and Performance

Thanks to the work of Niall Slater (1985), Timothy Moore (1998, 2012), and C.W. Marshall (2006), it is now commonplace to think of Plautine drama primarily as performance rather than text. The principal advantage of this approach is that, in addition to analyzing the text of a play, scholars can consider other factors concomitant with performance in their analyses; factors such as actors, audience, delivery, temporal sequencing, and spatial positioning of the performance – essentially all the various aspects of the *mise-en-scène* of a theatrical performance that are not immediately visible in studying the words spoken on stage. Necessary to an ongoing dialogue regarding Plautine drama as performance is an acknowledgement that the theatrical performances of Roman comedy were not discrete events that existed in isolation from other types of performance on display at Rome. Roman culture was highly performative, meaning that the Romans placed a high value on social performances of various types, ranging from political speeches and legal arguments to verbal and sartorial displays of class and education. In the same way that texts from the same culture share a common language and can reference or allude to one another through a system of intertextuality, the various genres of performance in Roman culture employed a common vocabulary of gesture, and frequently one type of performance could be cited or embedded within another (Dutsch 2013).

Of the various genres of performance at Rome, the performance of Roman religion was one of the most closely related to Roman drama. In fact, we have no indication that Roman drama was ever staged outside of a religious event of some sort. A productive way to think of the relationship between Roman religion and Plautine comedy is to consider both of these cultural phenomena as elements of a system of overlapping and related social performances at Rome. The citation of Roman religious ritual within Plautus represents a

playful and often parodic appropriation of religious material that comments wryly on Roman religious beliefs and practices while at the same time adding structure, meaning, and humor to the plays themselves. After providing an overview of some basic Roman religious concepts and practices, including a brief description of the religious festivals and venues at which Plautine drama was performed, I will then use *Poenulus* as a case study for how religion in and around Plautine drama provides structure and meaning to the plays as well as reflects contemporary issues regarding the practice of religion at Rome during Plautus's day. It is not my purpose in this chapter to provide an exhaustive list or typology of the religious material in Plautine drama; rather, I will use a few representative examples of the way religious performances are frequently cited within Plautus.

The Religious Context of Plautine Comedy

For modern sensibilities, issues of belief rather than action or performance are primary when considering religious behavior. This was not the case for the Romans of Plautus's day, for whom the term "religion" denoted a set of scrupulously observed actions that connected humans to the divine and ensured the maintenance or restoration of harmony between the two groups, a state referred to as the *pax de(or)um* (peace with the gods: Scheid 2003, pp. 18–19; Orlin 2007; Bernstein 2007, p. 227). The importance of maintaining a connection with the gods through meticulous repetition of prescribed rituals can be seen in the two competing etymologies of the Latin word *religio*, as being derived either from *religare* – to bind back (Servius *ad Verg. Aen.* 8.349; Lucr. 1.931; August. *Retract.* 1.13), or from *relegere* – to read over again (Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.28.72; Gell. *NA* 4.9.1; Hoyt 1912; Scheid 2003, p. 22). This emphasis on enacted ritual, carefully monitored, places the system of Roman religion squarely within the sphere of Roman social performance. The *pax de(or)um* could only be maintained through the correct human execution of the actions required by the gods, which in turn led to the prospering of the Roman state. The best way to maintain the *pax de(or)um* was to perform all the annual rites and festivals that the state had pledged to its various deities. The Romans held that aberrant circumstances of various kinds – labeled *prodigia* (prodigies) – could indicate a breach of the *pax de(or)um* caused by some neglected requirement, which would need to be repaired by performing certain actions. Things taken as prodigies could include natural disasters, rare meteorological events, crushing defeat in battle, birth defects in humans or animals, and various supernatural phenomena, such as statues sweating blood or voices being heard (Orlin 2002, pp. 203–207). Solutions were found by oracular consultation of the Sybilline books, performed and interpreted by a college of priests called the *decemviri* (or later *quindecimviri*) *sacris faciundis* (Scheid 2003, p. 136). The expiation of prodigies included a range of ritual actions, from requiring citizens to pray in the temples throughout the city on certain days (*supplicatio*) to the importation of new deities or even, in extreme cases, the human sacrifice of foreigners (Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 83; Beard et al. 1998b, pp. 158–159).

The concept of *do ut des* (I give in order that you give) was fundamental to the maintenance of the *pax de(or)um* and was an acknowledgment that humans, in addition to their desire to please the gods, also wanted certain things from them in return. The sacrifice of

animals and the offering of wine and other foodstuffs comprised the primary gifts offered by Romans to the gods, with each deity preferring slightly different offerings and ritual actions. Not only the physical goods provided to the gods but also the actions of the rituals themselves were considered part of the offerings intended to please the divine (Sharrock 2009, pp. 56–63). For this reason, there was scrupulous attention to correct pronunciation of prayers and adherence to correct sequences and proper performance of all ritual actions. Participation in rituals was restricted according to class and gender, with various requirements for the clothing and posture of the celebrants. Any aberration in such performances could render the ritual infelicitous and require repetition (*instauratio*) in order to ensure that the deities in question were satisfied (Scheid 2003, p. 97).

The actions that were considered part of the regular offerings to the gods included a number of annual religious festivals that featured the performance of drama (*ludi scaenici*) along with various races and sporting events (*ludi circenses*). The festivals at which the plays were performed in Plautus's day included: (i) the *ludi Romani* – the oldest of the Roman festivals, these games were sacred to Jupiter and held in mid-September, featuring four days of *ludi scaenici* during Plautus's lifetime, (ii) the *ludi Plebeii* – this festival was a plebeian counterpart to the *ludi Romani* held in early November with at least three days of theatrical performances, first celebrated in 220 BCE, (iii) the *ludi Apollinares* – sacred to Apollo, these games, established in 212 BCE following the advice of an oracle, took place in July and featured at least two days of performances, and (iv) the *ludi Megalenses* – also introduced based on oracular advice, these games welcomed the arrival of the goddess Cybele or Magna Mater from Phrygia in 204 and first featured theatrical entertainments in 194 BCE (Scullard 1981, pp. 159–158, 183–187, and 196–197; Marshall 2006, pp. 16–17). Over the years, from the mid-Republic down into the Empire, each of these festivals expanded to feature more days for performances. Shortly after the death of Plautus, the *ludi Cereales*, a festival sacred to the goddess Ceres, began to feature regular dramatic performances, likely in 176 BCE (though there is some controversy over this date – it may have been as early as 220 BCE); these games would have added another venue for revivals of Plautine comedy (Le Bonniec 1958, pp. 320–323; Spaeth 1996, p. 15; Manuwald 2011, pp. 43–44). In addition to these annual festivals, theater was also presented at special, one-time events, such as temple dedications, triumphal celebrations for victorious generals, and aristocratic funerals. At all of these religious ceremonies, drama – including Plautus's Greek-style comedies (*fabulae palliatae*), mythological tragedies (*tragoediae*), historical dramas (*fabulae praetextae*), and improvised comedies (Atellan farce) – was presented alongside various religious performances, such as processions, sacrifices, oaths, and prayers, all as offerings intended to please the gods.

In addition to the temporal proximity, the spatial proximity of religious and theatrical performances at Rome is also revealing. There were no permanent theaters in Rome during the time of Plautus, which meant that temporary stages had to be erected for each festival, paired with either constructed or found viewing areas. Each festival was associated with a different area of the city: the *ludi Romani*, triumphs, and funerals with the Forum and the Capitoline Hill; the *ludi plebeii* and *ludi Apollinares* with the Circus Flaminius and Campus Martius; and the *ludi Megalenses* with the Palatine Hill (Marshall 2006, pp. 36–48). Temple steps could be used as seating areas, as Goldberg (1998) has demonstrated was the case for the steps of the temple of Magna Mater during the *ludi Megalenses*.

In fact, the architectural connection between theaters and temples at Rome can be seen not only in the first permanent theater in the city, the theater of Pompey, which combined a stone theater with a temple of Venus Victrix, but also in a survey of theatrical-temple complexes throughout the Roman world (Hanson 1959b). The close spatial relationship between theaters and temples allowed for the performances to be readily conceived of as offerings to the gods who were watching the proceedings. Even when performances took place away from the temples of the deities honored in a given festival, as was frequently the case with races at the Circus Maximus, statues of the gods could be carried in procession to the location of the performance so as not to miss out (Bernstein 2007).

Judging from the temporal and spatial proximity of the theatrical and religious at Rome, one can see that Roman theater generally, and Plautine comedy more specifically, was embedded within a religious context (the festival) and surrounded within that context by other smaller-scale religious performances (prayers, sacrifices, processions, etc.). To borrow and adapt terminology from Erving Goffman (1974), whereas in modern western culture theater is experienced in a commercial frame, for the Romans, theater took place primarily in a religious frame. In other words, for us drama and religion are two separate spheres of activity; for the Romans, drama was a subset of the religious. Understanding the religious framing of Roman comedy adds emphasis to the embedded religious performances within the texts of Plautus, an emphasis that is not immediately apparent in reading the plays as texts separated from the festival context.

Methods of Examining Religion in Plautus

John A. Hanson's article "Plautus as a Sourcebook for Roman Religion" (1959a), though nearly 60 years old, remains one of the most influential studies of religion in Plautine drama. In this piece, Hanson makes a catalog of religious elements in Plautus, organized according to the attitudes toward and beliefs about the divine expressed in each passage. This article is a useful resource for the sheer amount of data that it contains from across the breadth of the Plautine corpus, along with its elucidation of prevalent religious attitudes of the mid-republic. However, a weakness of the catalog approach is that passages are necessarily taken out of context, which prevents the reader from seeing how religious material inflects the meaning of the individual plays while at the same time obscuring the importance of the shared performance context of Roman drama and Roman religion.

Boris Dunsch improves on Hanson's work by insisting on the importance of context and performance in the analysis of religious material in Plautus, which he divides into seven categories based on the broader distinctions of whether the discourse in question is spoken about, with, or by the gods (2009, 2014). Dunsch uses *Mercator* as a case study for analyzing religious discourse in the *palliatae*, with six of Dunsch's seven categories represented in this play. Dunsch spends the most time on category III: communication with the gods, in which he discusses the ontological status of prayers uttered on the Roman stage; whether they were considered real in the world of Roman cult or were only parodies. Dunsch points out that the more sincere a prayer is on the Plautine stage, the more likely it is to be answered in the dramatic action of the play.

My approach to religion in Plautine drama is to see the religious material in the plays as citations of religious performances that were temporally and spatially proximate to the performance of the plays; a type of interpreformativity, if you will. Like Dunsch, I rely on the analysis of each example as performance placed within the larger context of each individual play; like Hanson, I use religious material in the plays to elucidate Plautus's interaction with the religious issues of his day. Unlike either of these authors, I see parody as the primary lens for examining religion in and around Plautus. A paradigm for the parodic relationship between the comic content of the plays and the religious context can be seen in the description of the procession from the *ludi Romani* provided by Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Among the various participants in the procession, there was a group of pyrrhic dancers, performing in full panoply of armor, followed by a group of dancers dressed as satyrs who mimicked the steps of the more serious group preceding them. Of this group, Dionysius says (7.72.10): *Οὗτοι κατέσσωπόν τε καὶ κατεμιμούντο τὰς σπουδαίας κινήσεις ἐπὶ τὰ γελοιότερα μεταφέροντες* ("These men watched closely and imitated the serious movements [of the previous chorus] changing them to more humorous things"). The relationship of the comic satyr chorus to the preceding acts could be framed as "repetition with critical distance," which is how Linda Hutcheon (2000, p.6) defines parody. This broad definition of parody is useful because it allows both for parodies that ridicule as well as parodies that celebrate and endorse. Thus, by using Hutcheon's definition, one can acknowledge the prevalence of parody within the religious material in Plautus without insisting that such parodies are meant to mock or deride the system of Roman religion. When Plautus incorporates religious material into his plays, there is always some sort of difference between the cultic model and its comic counterpart that creates this critical distance, whether that difference be in the words spoken or in some other factor dependent on the *mise-en-scène* of the performance, such as the identity of the celebrants, posture, gestures, attire, etc. Like the satyr chorus in the procession, a prayer or oath in Plautine comedy presented the spectators with a parodic imitation of more serious actions performed elsewhere in the festival, in close temporal and spatial proximity to the model. In this way, Roman comedy can be seen as part of a system of parodic commentary built into the cultural poetics of the institution of religious festivals at Rome.

For Simon Dentith (2000), it is not enough to label a passage as parody; one also needs to see how that parody functions within its larger context and within the culture that produced it. Accordingly, I argue that religious parodies in Plautus provide structure and meaning to the plays in which they are found and that Plautus includes this material in his plays as a way of commenting on some of the religious controversies of his day, which include issues such as the question of morality in religious observance, the addition of new cults to the Roman system of worship, and the interplay of conservatism and change in Roman religion. Eric Orlin has argued that religion during the mid-republic was shaped in large part by the twin pressures of foreign expansionism and elite competition (2007). The effects of these forces on religious practices can most readily be seen in the increase of new cults at Rome during this period, with both cults to divine qualities and cults to foreign deities incorporated into the Roman pantheon. Using *Poenulus* as an example, I will illustrate how Plautus uses a religious framework in the play in order to comment on the social hazards of adopting foreign cults. This threat is personified in the character of Hanno, whose hybrid mixture of Roman piety and Punic perfidy symbolizes the

complexities of acculturating a conquered community, and by extension, of Romanizing a foreign cult. Though *Poenulus* is frequently considered to be an outlier among Plautus's comedies because of its Punic characters and troublesome textual issues, the very foreignness of the main characters makes for a useful study of Roman religious attitudes to the foreign. Furthermore, the argument for the ambivalence of the foreign in Plautine commentary on Roman religion is strengthened by demonstrating that the argument even holds true for a play dealing not only with Greeks but also with Carthaginians.

***Poenulus*: Hanno and the Danger of Foreign Religion**

Plautus's *Poenulus* ("The Little Punic") takes place in the Aetolian town of Calydon in northwestern Greece, a region that was the site of extensive Roman campaigning during the 190s BCE. The title character of the play is Hanno the Carthaginian, who, as the prologue tells us, is roving around the Mediterranean in search of his two daughters, now named Adelphasium and Anterastilis, both kidnapped at a young age. The main action of the play is Hanno's reunification with his daughters and the defeat of the pimp Lycus, who has knowingly been keeping the two freeborn Carthaginians as courtesans-in-training in his household. Despite the centrality of Hanno to the overall plot, he does not actually appear on stage until line 960. The first two-thirds of the play are dominated by Agorastocles, a young man in love with Adelphasium, and his slave Milphio, who on their own try to free the girls from the pimp. Agorastocles also happens to be a kidnapped Carthaginian, and coincidentally Adelphasium's second cousin, as he learns at the end of the play from Hanno. At the outset of the play, Agorastocles and Milphio elaborate a plot to free the girls from Lycus by framing him for harboring a fugitive slave. This plan succeeds, but, since the action of the play takes place on the day of the Aphrodisia, a festival sacred to Venus of Calydon, they have to wait until the following day to sue Lycus for damages and thus hopefully free the girls. In the meantime, one of Lycus's slaves reveals to Milphio that the two girls are actually freeborn Carthaginian citizens. When Hanno arrives, Milphio stumbles upon the truth by enlisting Hanno in a plot to gain the girls' freedom by pretending that he is their father. In the end, Agorastocles, Adelphasium, and Anterastilis are recognized as genuine Carthaginian citizens and, after the pimp has been dealt with, the reunited family plans to journey back to Africa with Hanno.

Although nominally set in the Greek world (like all of Plautus's plays), religious material that reflects Roman beliefs and practices permeates the play. There are numerous prayers throughout that reflect cultic Roman prayer language, with a few parodic twists, thus exemplifying the premium placed on using the correct words and formulae in Roman ritual. Lycus tells the audience of his numerous attempts to sacrifice to Venus at her temple (450–466), all of which the priest deemed unfit because of abnormal organs in the sacrificial offerings. This description illustrates the concept of *do ut des* as well as the way in which the Romans looked for communication from the gods in signs interpreted by religious officials that often necessitated further ritual action, here in the form of a repetition of the ritual. Adelphasium and Anterastilis, on the other hand, achieve a propitious offering on the first try, along with the promise from the priest that they would soon be reunited with their birth family (1205–1208). In these two scenes, Plautus uses Roman

religious sensibilities to mark Lycus as the true enemy of society and to portray the Carthaginian girls as having been successfully acculturated, as evidenced by the divergent results for their respective sacrifices. The clearest connection in the play to the world of Roman cult, and the one that provides the most structure and meaning to the plot, is the centering of the dramatic action of the play around a festival to Venus called the Aphrodisia. Lycus's visit to the shrine in the morning gives Agorastocles and Milphio an opportunity to plot against him. The audience first meets Adelphasium and Anterastilis while they are preparing for the festival, and in the course of the play, they provide two vivid descriptions of the festivities at the temple (264–270, 1173–1181). Furthermore, the closure of the courts for the holiday necessitates the second plot to free the girls, which is what brings Hanno together with his lost daughters after they return from the festival. Though none of the annual festivals that featured theatrical events during Plautus's day were dedicated to Venus, the Aphrodisia in *Poenulus* can still be read as a reflection of the festival context of Roman comedy generally. Similar to the “play within a play” technique used so often by dramatists, the Aphrodisia in *Poenulus* presented the Roman audience with a festival within a festival.

This trope, however, does more than just provide an interior model for the external religious framing of the theatrical performance. The Aphrodisia, as described in *Poenulus* with its ritual bathing and presentation of prostitutes at the shrine of Venus, closely resembles the cult of Venus Erycina, which was adopted from Sicily in 215 BCE (Livy 22.9–10; 23.30–31). When this cult was initially brought to Rome, many of its exotic aspects, such as rituals involving sacred doves and a connection to prostitution, were removed in order to emphasize the maternal aspects of Venus as the mother and protector of the Roman people. In spite of this attempted sanitization of the cult, interest in the original Sicilian practices remained and eventually the cult received a second temple, this one outside the *pomerium* (the sacred boundary of the city), at which the original, more exotic rites were performed (Livy 40.34.4; Strabo 6.272; Orlin 2000). Though this temple was not dedicated until 181 BCE, three years after Plautus's death, the vow to build the temple was made in 184, likely in response to interest in the original practices of the cult during the latter years of Plautus's career. *Poenulus*, likely written in the early 180's, represents this interest in the Sicilian version of the cult (Galinsky 1969). The connection between the Aphrodisia and Venus Erycina is also hinted at by the Carthaginian identity of five of the characters, since the Sicilian cult at Eryx was closely related to the worship of the Carthaginian goddess Astarte. Further emphasis on the connection comes when the audience learns that the girls were originally kidnapped by a Sicilian pirate (897). Given these similarities, and the lack of an actual cult of Venus at Calydon, when the audience heard Adelphasium praising Calydonian Venus (1181), they would have likely thought of Venus Erycina.

This connection to Venus Erycina brings up the issue of foreign deities and the politics involved in adopting them into the Roman pantheon. The controversies surrounding this process can be seen reflected in the paradoxical character of Hanno, concerning whom scholarly opinion is largely divided. Gratwick (1982) says that the presentation of Hanno is wholly sympathetic, while Franko (1996) argues that the piety of Hanno is undercut by suggestions of incestuous behavior with his daughters. De Melo (2012) says that he is presented “in a very positive light” in a play that is devoid of racial slurs, while Richlin

(2005) argues that the title of the play itself is a racial slur. Starks (2000) strikes a middle ground by noting the presence of jokes based on racial stereotypes while also illustrating how the insults and laughter in these jokes ultimately redound on those offering the criticism. This range of scholarly opinion is evidence of the polyphony with which Hanno is presented in the play. When Hanno's hybrid character is put in context with the festival of Aphrodite of Calydon/Venus Erycina, it becomes clear that the inconsistencies in Hanno's character serve to comment on the complexities of sanitizing a foreign cult for adoption at Rome.

During his time on stage, Hanno offers a number of prayers that are noteworthy for their strict adherence to the formulae and expectations of Roman prayers. In the 500 lines during which he is on stage he offers four complete prayers (930–953, 1163–1164, 1187–1191, 1274–1276) and a number of shorter asseverations (967, 1055, 1104, 1107, 1114), plus one digression on how the gods have aided his family on account of his pious behavior (1251–1257). As Hanson remarks, Hanno “prays more consistently and more sincerely than any other Plautine character” (1959a, p. 92). However, the piety that these religious performances ascribe to Hanno is ultimately undermined by his exotic appearance and various hints at deceitful and even incestuous behavior. For Hanno's prayers, parody is created not by difference in the words he utters but instead by his unusual attire and incongruent behavior throughout.

The first prayer delivered by Hanno in Latin will serve as an example for his prayers throughout the play. As Hanno enters the city, he calls upon the local gods, saying:

*Deos deasque ueneror qui hanc urbem colunt
ut quod de mea re huc ueni rite uenerim,
measque hic ut gnatas et mei fratris filium
reperire me siritis, di uostram fidem!*

Gods and goddesses who dwell in this city, I pray
that, concerning the matter for which I have come, I have come righteously,
and that you will allow me to find my daughters here and
my brother's son. Gods I pray for your faithfulness! (950–953)

Hanno begins his prayer with a generic invocation, since he is unaware of the names of the specific gods of Calydon, but he makes up for this by including a relative clause that defines the geographic boundaries to which he refers. He then petitions the gods with the verb *ueneror* and finishes his prayer with the asseveration *di uostram fidem*, which commonly appears in Roman drama and oratory as a truncated way of requesting the aid of the gods (Hickson 1993, pp. 34–36, 50, 82–83; Donat. *ad And.* 716). Nothing in the words that Hanno utters is at all aberrant from typical Roman prayer formulae, but the parody in this scene comes in the appearance of Hanno. Proper attire was important in Roman ceremonies, with distinctions in attire made between different modes of sacrifice (*ritus graecus* and *ritus romanus*). A prayer or a sacrifice could have been considered invalid if the celebrant was dressed inappropriately, no matter how accurate the pronunciation of the language had been (Scheid 2003, pp. 36–38). When Agorastocles and Milphio first encounter Hanno, Milphio refers to him as a bird because of his long fluttering tunic, joking

that the only reason he would dress in such a manner is because his clothes had been stolen at the baths (975–976). Milphio also jokes about how Hanno does not wear a belt (1008) and how Hanno and those in his entourage wear earrings (980–981). When the irate soldier Antamoenides comes onstage, he notes the effeminacy of Hanno's loose-fitting, ground-length tunic (1303; Starks 2000, pp. 177–181). When seen in performance, Hanno's extravagantly foreign attire would have created dissonance with the extreme accuracy of the ritual language that he utters.

Another surprise comes from the way that this prayer is framed. In the text of the play as it now stands, these lines are preceded by two versions of the same prayer in Punic, commonly referred to as Text 1 (930–939) and Text 2 (940–949; de Melo 2012, pp. 173–222; Gratwick 1971). Given the limited number of extant Punic texts, it is difficult to determine the extent to which these two passages present authentic Punic language or merely a comic imitation of it (Richlin 2005, pp. 188–189). Regardless of the authenticity of the Punic in these passages, in the semiotics of the play, the words function as a foreign language, whatever might have been their relation to the actual Punic language as it was spoken by native Carthaginians.

Since lines 930–960 present three different versions of the same speech, it is most likely that in performance the actor playing Hanno would not recite all three, though it is quite possible that he would have recited one of the Punic passages followed by the Latin, which the audience would have been sure to understand, an approach that John Starks has proven feasible in performance (Gratwick 1971, p. 33; Starks 2000, p. 170). Furthermore, a bilingual entry monologue by Hanno would emphasize the theme of Punic manipulation of language that is suggested at the beginning of the play (112–113). In fact, it is precisely in Hanno's ability to speak multiple languages and to master various registers of discourse that he presents the typical traits of Carthaginian perfidy and deceit, commonly referred to in Roman sources as *Punica fides* (Leigh 2004, pp. 31–37). Thus, the piety and sincerity of Hanno's initial prayer is vitiated by both his clothing and his capacity for bilingual trickery.

Hanno's other prayers throughout the play follow a similar format: the language of each prayer is punctiliously accurate according to Roman standards for prayer, but this seeming piety is undercut by Hanno's appearance and behavior. Most surprising is Hanno's treatment of his daughters when he finally encounters them. Of all the characters in the play, Adelphasium and Anterastilis receive the brunt of his Carthaginian trickery. As predicted in the prologue (104–111), Hanno first pretends to be a customer, seeking to engage their services for the night, thus steering too close to incest for Roman tastes (1217–1220; Franko 1995). After this, Hanno pretends that he plans to sue them in court for stealing his daughters from him, a playful way of revealing his identity, but the young women fail to understand his subtle message (1225–1250). Agorastocles and Hanno keep this up until the girls are frightened out of their wits before finally revealing the truth (“wretched me, I’m terrified! ... I’m standing thus astonished, out of my mind,” says Adelphasium, 1249–1250). The enjoyment of his daughters’ distress at the most crucial moment destabilizes Hanno’s frequent claims of *pietas* (1137, 1190, 1255, 1277) a virtue based largely on the honoring of family ties.

The conflicting traits of piety, deceit, and incestuous desire combine in the character of Hanno to create an odd mixture of traditional Roman qualities interlaced with stereotypes

of otherness. Placed in the context of Roman expansionism in the second century BCE and the concomitant adoptions of foreign cults at Rome, the character of Hanno could be read as symbolic of the complexities inherent for the Romans in embracing foreign religious practices. On one level, Hanno's adherence to Roman norms for religious performance could symbolize the successful acculturation of a foreign enemy, surely a popular theme during this age of Roman expansion beyond the confines of Italy. After all, what could be more gratifying than seeing a foreigner in speech and appearance – and a Carthaginian no less – who had been thoroughly tamed by the dominating power of Roman civilization? Hanno prays to Jupiter, not Baal (or Tanit, whose veneration included infanticide). And yet, upon closer examination, this comfortable affirmation of Roman imperialism is destabilized by the irreconcilable mixture of Roman piety with Punic perfidy in the character of Hanno. He seems to reflect Roman beliefs and practices, but this Roman-ness is counterbalanced by the native element of Punic deceit that ultimately cannot be separated from his character. As was frequently the case with the Carthaginian general Hannibal, the question is raised whether Hanno's facility with Roman language and culture is a front for his ability to infiltrate and deceive (Leigh 2004, pp. 24–56).

Similar to the paradoxes in the character of Hanno, foreign cults that were adopted for political reasons frequently brought along with them certain alien elements that could not be easily removed, as was the case with the cult of Magna Mater when it was imported from Pergamum to Rome in 204 BCE. The goddess was accompanied by a group of priests, known as *Galli*, who were self-castrated males that wore long, colorful robes and danced through the streets beating tambourines and drums, while begging for alms (Dion. Hal. 2.19.4–5; Beard et al. 1998b, p. 47). The adherents of this cult, who came to Rome from Asia Minor, worshipped the goddess with wild music, chanting, and ecstatic dancing, activities that the Senate soon forbade for native-born Romans (Beard et al. 1998b, p. 210). This law suggests that it was only after the cult had been adopted that the Romans learned “the awful truth of a cult that was wildly too foreign to fit even the most expansive definition of what was Roman” (Beard et al. 1998a, p. 98).

Sometimes the threat posed by foreign elements within a cult could even prove to be an insurmountable barrier to the official endorsement of a foreign cult at Rome. Such was the case with the notorious Bacchanalian affair of 186 BCE, in which the Senate cracked down on the popular worship of Bacchus that had developed in the city outside of the channels of official sanction, resulting in the arrest and death of many individuals and the proclamation of decrees severely limiting the participation of Roman citizens in the cult (Livy 39.8–14; *ILS* 18). Livy claims that the moral dissolution of the participants in the cult had allowed it to become a front for various criminal enterprises, but it is possible that the repression of the cult originated more in the Senate's desire to maintain control in religious affairs than from a need to punish immoral behavior (Gruen 1996, pp. 34–78). Whatever the cause, Plautus was aware of the episode, as evidenced by a reference at *Casina* 979–981 that the Bacchantes no longer revel.

The case of Venus Erycina, the goddess represented in the play by Venus of Calydon, is also quite fitting for a consideration of the dangers associated with the importation of foreign deities since her cult, when it was originally adopted in 215 BCE, was cleansed of its foreign elements, but by what may have been popular demand, a new temple outside the *pomerium* was built that could accommodate the foreign aspects of her worship, such

as a close connection with prostitution. The original impetus to import the goddess was to shore up alliances with Sicily during the Second Punic War by claiming shared ancestry, but this political maneuvering was to have an unforeseen consequence, when years later desire grew to incorporate the Sicilian and Carthaginian aspects of the worship of Erycina that had originally been excluded because they were not appropriate to traditional Roman religious practices.

In colonizing foreign religious expression and turning it to political purposes, the goal may have been to Romanize, but the actual effect was to create a syncretistic hybridity, in which the cults in question were neither wholly foreign nor entirely Roman. The process of Romanizing something, whether it be a religious cult or a Greek play, simultaneously admits the otherness of the object. To paraphrase Homi Bhabha: to be Romanized is *emphatically* not to be Roman (Bhabha 1984, p. 128). In *Poenulus*, the bifurcation of Hanno's character into pious father and deceptive foreigner presents a parodic image of the issues at stake in the adoption of foreign cults at Rome, emphasizing both the potential and the threat involved. The hybrid characterization of Hanno is thus reflective of the pressures put on the Roman religious system during the mid-republic by the expansion of Roman hegemony throughout the Mediterranean region, while the intertwining of this theme with the festival of the Aphrodisia/Venus Erycina and all of its concomitant religious discourse in the play illustrates just how embedded religion was in Plautine comedy and how embedded the performance of Plautine comedy was within the religious/festival context.

Conclusion

The interrelated nature of Roman theater and Roman religion, as exemplified in *Poenulus*, provided enrichment to both of these institutions. The performance of comedy as a part of the *ludi scaenici* that was built into the festival structure ensured a ready mode of humorous commentary on the serious aspects of the rituals – a larger-scale reflection of the parodic satyr chorus described by Dionysius. Roman comedy, in turn, was enriched by the interperformative relationship that it shared with its religious context through the citation of religious performances on the stage, which functioned to provide structure and meaning to the plays. In this way, theater and religion contributed to the rich tapestry of interrelated performances at Rome. Furthermore, the co-option of comedy into the religious institution of the festivals provided a safe venue for critical commentary on Roman religion and politics in a controlled environment, functioning like a pressure valve that allowed potential tensions to be diffused through laughter.

FURTHER READING

Though they are somewhat dated, Fowler (1911 and 1899) remain foundational treatments of Roman religion and the festivals of the Roman Republic. North (2000) offers a succinct description of Roman religion, while Rüpke (2012) focuses on Republican Rome. Rüpke's *Companion* (2007) presents essays focused on various aspects of the subject. Graf

(2007) and Rehm (2007) provide useful overviews of religion and religious festivals in ancient drama, including comparisons with the Greek material. Feeney (1998) discusses the relationship between religion and literature at Rome. For the politics involved in the adoption of foreign cults at Rome, see Orlin (2010). For deified abstractions in Roman religion generally but also on the stage, see Clark (2007 esp. ch. 3). For Roman religion in Terence, see Gellar-Goad (2013).

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CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Gender and Sexuality in Plautus

Serena S. Witzke

Introduction

Gender and sexuality in modern society can be described as follows: “sexuality is whom you want to go to bed *with*, and gender is who you want to go to bed *as*.” But in antiquity, women had little choice over the former, and few people had much choice about the latter. Gender (and its performance) was determined by sex, class, status, age, and occupation; sexuality (and its expression) was facilitated by gender norms. While men’s sexuality could exist independent of women, women’s sexuality was defined in relation to men and did not exist independent of men, at least in the dramatic world of New Comedy.

Extant New Comedy consists of Menander (342/41–290 BCE) in Athens, and Plautus (254–184 BCE) and Terence (195/85–159 BCE) in Rome. Menander’s plots typically involve wayward young citizen men in love with impoverished citizen women, parental interference, then sincere reunions of fathers and sons following the removal of barriers to marriage. Plautus’s successor Terence continues Menander’s plot of citizen prerogative to marriage, but from a perspective critical of citizen masculine privilege and its damaging effects (James 2013). Plautus, by contrast, rejects Menander’s sentimentality and the interest in citizen families that Terence demonstrates. The Saturnalian inversion of Plautus’s plots – putting enslaved persons and non-citizens in comedic positions dominant to their social superiors (Segal 1968) – allows Plautus to be less conservative: he is relatively uninterested in citizen marriage and generative sexuality (see Chapter 7). While he frequently stages the “boy loves girl, boy tries to get girl” plot, he does not really care about the boy – or the love – but rather focuses on the subaltern characters (slaves, parasites, sex laborers, and others) who help him get the girl. Citizen romance offers a pretext for plotting by the *servus callidus*, the clever enslaved man. When citizens stand at the forefront of his comedy, Plautus is

critical of their values and behaviors (slave torture: McCarthy 2000; Stewart 2012; husband-wife relations: Moore 1998; Rei 1998; citizen “loverboy”: Anderson 1993). Plautus’s dramatic priorities allow us to glimpse a Roman society that is not limited to the upper-class citizen families that dominate later Latin literature.

Though New Comedy in general is heteronormative (that is, promoting man/woman couplings as normal and preferred) and representative of Roman cultural norms (women’s sexuality is restricted to marriage, men are dominant, the elderly are asexual, etc.), the Saturnalian inversion of Plautus’s comedy occasionally allows him to stage behavior and sexuality contrary to ideology but consistent with Roman social realities: lecherous old men desirous of extramarital sex (Cody 1976), dominant women with domestic authority (Hemelrijk 1999; Moore 1998), cross-dressing (Gold 1998), and suggestions of sexual exploitation of enslaved men (Jocelyn 2000; Kwintner 1992; Rei 1998; Richlin 1993; Williams 1999). Plautus also stages a figure absent in the comedies of Menander and Terence, the *pseudomeretrix*: a young woman abducted from citizen parents, enslaved to a *leno* or living with a *meretrix*, and trained in the seductive arts, all the while retaining her *pudicitia*, chastity, the fundamental virtue of the Roman citizen woman. This fantasy character allows Plautus to have his cake and eat it too; the *pseudomeretrix* can speak on stage, flirt, exude desirability, and retain by play’s end the requisite respectability.

Free Men

Younger Men

When considering lived realities, or dramatic representations of them, in ancient Rome, discussion must begin with status, as status defined and restricted the lives of ancient Romans. We begin with the free young men of New Comedy in the same way that Plautus does: to get them and their uninteresting affairs out of the way early. Plautus was primarily interested in whatever would offer the most entertainment, but the genre’s young men offered little fun. His *adulescentes* are dull-witted, overly emotional, and generally useless (Anderson 1993, pp. 60–87). Their needs are introduced to be passed on to more amusing characters who will take over the plot (e.g. *servi callidi*). Far from depicting sympathetic young men who display remorse for wrongdoing or make sincere proclamations of love, as Menander does (*Epitrepontes*, *Misoumenos*), Plautus introduces the lovestruck young man only to undercut his emotions (and citizen privilege) through a trickster character who finds the weepy young man ridiculous (as in *Asinaria* and *Pseudolus*).

Plautus largely ignores generative citizen marriage: only one of his young men, Lysiteles in *Trinummus*, cares about his good reputation and making a proper marriage, and he is not the play’s focus. Three plays feature young men already married at the start of the play (*Amphitruo*, *Menaechmi*, and *Stichus*), and in each the marital discord or threat to the marriage is exploited for humor. Two other plays (*Aulularia* and *Truculentus*) involve a raped citizen girl and her forced marriage to the man who raped her, but neither of these plots occupies much stage time. The majority of Plautus’s plays involving *adulescentes* are about the young men’s desire for an enslaved girl (*Casina*, *Epidicus*) or a *meretrix* (*Asinaria*, *Bacchides*, *Cistellaria*, *Curculio*, *Mercator*, *Miles*, *Mostellaria*, *Poenulus*, *Pseudolus*,

Rudens, *Truculentus*), and of these, only five imply that marriage will occur after the play has concluded (the girl is discovered to be a citizen in *Casina*, *Cistellaria*, *Curculio*, *Poenulus*, and *Rudens*). Plautus dismisses emotional scenes of love or betrothal, joking in the prologue to *Casina* that the audience should not expect the *adulescens* to show up at all in the play, because its author did not want him to (64–65).

Plautus's "young man in love" plot (Rosivach 2013) is not the journey from misspent youth to citizen marriage as it is in Menander and, to an extent, in Terence. Plautus's *adulescentes* attempt to defraud parents of money to spend on illicit pleasures (*Asinaria*, *Bacchides*, *Epidicus*, *Mercator*, *Mostellaria*, *Pseudolus*, *Truculentus*; Segal 1968, pp. 15–20 and 27–29) and avoid their citizen or filial duties. They actively avoid marriage, responsibility, and personal growth. The enslaved persons in the play highlight and criticize the citizen youth's privilege: he is mocked for excessive proclamations of love (*Asinaria*, *Curculio*, *Pseudolus*), derided for his fickleness (*Epidicus*), and warned of his wastefulness (*Bacchides*, *Curculio*). The *adulescentes'* sexuality and gendered privilege are demonstrated primarily through their pursuit of *meretrices*, whose very existence is predicated upon citizen masculine privilege. Denied access to pre- and extramarital sex with citizen women and boys (as the irritable Palinurus reminds his young master in *Curculio*, 33–38), the *adulescentes* pursue permissible intercourse with sex laborers, to whom they feel entitled. Denied paternal funding, the dissolute young men turn to stealing, wheedling, and persuading their much cleverer slaves to solve their (free, elite, masculine) problems. The *adulescentes'* pursuit of *meretrices* (common enough to have its own verb, *scortari*) was the definitive performance of youthful masculine sexuality, provided they neither fell in love nor became obsessed. In *Menaechmi*, when the *matrona* is upset that her young husband consorts with the *meretrix* Erotium, her father scoffs, asserting that if young men did not dine out, drink with, and love *meretrices*, they might as well be slaves to women and sit with the *ancillae* carding wool (792–797). If men did not conform to this particular performance of masculinity, their gender identity itself was suspect, and they could be emasculated.

Older Men

In ancient Greece and Rome, older men (generally age 45 and above, while *adulescentes* might be 16–30, or even in their late 30s) were supposed to be married, responsible, and formerly procreative; they ought to have matured past frivolous or excessive sexual desire (Krauss 2004, pp. 88–182). Menander's older men are effectively asexual (with the exception of *Samia's* Demeas): they demonstrate sexuality through the existence of adult children or reunions with women they raped in their youth (*Georgos*, *Heros*). Terence's *senex* Chremes (*Phormio*) has two wives, but he claims that the sexual relationship was short-lived, and none of his other *senes* pursue young women.

Plautus stages *senes* who defy cultural expectations: far from asexual, they are wild for extramarital sex, despite the disapproval of their friends and family. Demaenetus of *Asinaria*, Philoxenus and Nicobulus of *Bacchides*, Lysidamus of *Casina*, the *senex* of *Cistellaria*, Demipho of *Mercator*, Periplectomenus of *Miles*, and Antipho of *Stichus* all show active sexual interest in young women, despite the criticisms of their wives, sons, and even slaves. In contrast to the *durus senex* who dourly performs his duty and condemns

the fun of others, the greybeard *senex amator* chases *meretrices* and enslaved women and competes with his son.

The lecherous *senex amator* fails in his role of responsible *paterfamilias*, and Plautus stages his well-deserved comeuppance with humor. The harsh fathers in *Bacchides*, Philoxenus and Nicobulus, berate the *meretrices* next door for swindling their sons but then hire the women themselves. When Demaenetus (*Asinaria*) bankrolls his son's year-long contract with his "girlfriend," he insists on a night with her too. But Demaenetus's wife Artemona cuts the party short and drags her embarrassed husband home while his son and *amica* tease him. Demipho (*Mercator*) sends his son away for wasting his money on sex laborers, only to steal his girl from him when the son returns from abroad, stashing her at the neighbor's house. His hopes of extramarital sex are dashed when the neighbor's wife discovers the girl and picks a public fight with her husband for bringing a *meretrix* into their home. Demipho must beg his son for forgiveness and ask that he not tell his mother.

Lysidamus's (*Casina*) comeuppance is the most severe. Perfumed and lovestruck, he tries to dupe his wife and undermine his son's interests by marrying their young *serva* Casina, whom his wife has raised like a daughter (46), to his *vilicus* (overseer) in order that Lysidamus might have sexual access to her too. While husbands had a legal right to sexually exploit any enslaved persons in their *familia*, Lysidamus's interest in Casina is particularly repugnant. He becomes visibly aroused as the play progresses, humping and kissing his overseer, then attempting to sexually assault "Casina," a slave sent to him in disguise by his own wife. After the masculine Casina (or Casinus, 814) beats, and maybe sexually assaults, Lysidamus and the overseer, the men must explain why they are disheveled and half-naked while the women laugh at them. Throughout the play, Plautus aligns the audience with the women, deriding Lysidamus for his age-inappropriate performance of sexuality (Moore 1998, pp. 158–180; Chapter 10 in this volume). Through his closing speeches about *senes amatores*, Plautus shows sympathy for the human weaknesses of the old men, but also gives the audience room to mock that weakness: the transgression of sociocultural norms is fair game for comedy.

Though many of Plautus's old men flout sexual expectations for their age and status, they still adhere to certain gender norms. They expect their wives and sons to obey them, even when the *senes* act inappropriately. "Take my wife, please!" is a long-standing Plautine joke, as marriage and misogyny are (disgruntled) bedfellows. Plautus stages several hostile old men: their wife-hating sentiments are shorthand performance of gendered expectations for their age and status. Megaronides and Callicles (*Trinummus*) wish their wives dead (as do Lysidamus in *Casina* and Demaenetus in *Asinaria*), and Periphanes (*Epidicus*) offers thanks to Orcus, god of death, for his wife's passing. Demipho (*Mercator*) is keen to trick his wife, and Simo (*Mostellaria*) beats a hasty retreat from his house whenever his wife pays him any particular attention. Unmarried Megadorus (*Aulularia*) hates the idea of a wealthy wife, fearing the loss of his domestic authority, while Periplectomenus (*Miles*) thanks the gods he avoided a wife entirely. In all of the above, the briefly sketched misogyny establishes character as effectively as an "old man" mask.

Most of Terence's *senes* are domestic despots, full of vitriol for long-suffering wives and apparently disobedient children, whom they persecute ruthlessly. But Plautus's old men are all bluster: their diatribes are style over substance. Lysidamus and Demaenetus may

wish their wives dead behind their backs, but when confronted by *uxores* unimpressed with their antics, the men quickly grovel or backpedal. Daemones in *Rudens* grumpily hollers at his wife (offstage) to cease her emotional outbursts, but over the course of the play he avoids making her angry or suspicious over the sex laborers he helps. And these wives do not simply take abuse. The *uxores dotatae* (dowered wives) consistently stand up to their husbands' bad behavior: Dorippa (*Mercator*) asks her father for a divorce, while Artemona (*Asinaria*) and Cleostrata (*Casina*) scheme to get even with their husbands. The *senes* cling to the illusion of domestic control, the authority invested in them by virtue of their gender, age, class, and status, but all the while Plautus undercuts that authority.

Soldiers

Plautus's most blatant stereotype of men's gender and cultural norms is the *miles*, soldier. The soldier represents gendered power in excess: arrogant and frequently violent, he embodies the overblown manliness that characterizes a mercenary. Plautus rejects this model of masculinity through his constant undercutting of the character, either by mockery (which goes over his head), or by the soldier's quick devolution into cowardice at the first sign of a threat (cf. Chapter 12). The soldier generally serves as an onstage antagonist for the *adulescens*, trying to take his woman (Cleomachus in *Bacchides*, Therapontigonus in *Curculio*, Pyrgopolinices in *Miles*, Antamynides in *Poenulus*, Stratophanes in *Truculentus*) or as an offstage threat that must be overcome (the brilliantly named Polymachaeroplages in *Pseudolus*). The soldier wants to use his mercenary's wealth to secure a long-term contract with a free sex laborer or purchase an enslaved one and make her his concubine. But his arrogance and hypermasculinity put him at odds with the clever slave – Plautus's representative of cultural subversion – who must defeat the soldier to prove his intellectual superiority.

The soldier and the comic *adulescens* stand on opposite ends of the spectrum of normative masculine gendered behavior. The soldier takes stereotypical Roman gender norms to their extreme: he is assertive, demanding, and vain, masculinity in extremis, but his uncontrolled libido signals effeminacy (Dutsch 2008). By contrast the *adulescens* is weak, weepy, and meek, but also effeminate because of his lovesickness (chasing girls is one thing, moping about them is another). By undermining the positions of both, Plautus exposes the immoderate expressions of masculinity in each: appropriate masculinity is demonstrated through the performance of moderate gendered behavior. Both the soldier and the *adulescens* violate the norms of this middle ground, and the result is effeminate, failed masculinity.

Vanity is the downfall of the soldier in *Miles Gloriosus*. Pyrgopolinices can barely keep his libido in check, a sign of his aberrant masculinity, which he incorrectly believes is evidence of virility. He boasts that he is incredibly beautiful (58–60), desired by all women (1087), and ought to be compensated for his superior sexual services (1061–1064). But his desire for payment for sex aligns him not with the sexuality of the free, active man, but with that of the sex laborer, whose sexuality exists only for use by other men. In the course of the play he treats as sexual objects a concubine, a “wife” and her *ancilla* (987–989, 1005–1006), his concubine's “sister,” and even the “captain” accompanying her (1105–1114). His vanity flattered by a supposedly married woman's advances, Pyrgopolinices is

also game for adultery, provided he not be caught (972, 1276). When he is caught, his defense is another boast – *she* came on to *him* (1403). The threat of castration further undermines his faulty sense of virility: his effeminate, uncontrolled lust will be curtailed by making him into a “woman.”

The Plautine soldier’s hypermasculinity expresses itself in his sexual entitlement: in the style of a Homeric war hero (itself inappropriate to Roman cultural norms), he needs a physical manifestation of his glory – a γῆρας – traditionally a woman. This entitlement encourages him to find a concubine to care for his personal and sexual needs, making him a convenient foil for the feckless *adulescens*, who also wants a woman, but has no means to realize his desire. But his sense of entitlement makes the soldier dangerous in a way that the *adulescens* is not. Citizen entitlement may encourage young men to rape young women in *Aulularia* and *Truculentus*, but these young men are chastened by fathers, and citizen women are protected by legitimate marriage to their rapists (a “happy ending” for Romans, however repugnant to modern readers). Soldiers, however, threaten physical violence when their desires are thwarted, often against unprotected women. After being imperiously insulted and extorted, then locked outside by his intended concubine Phronesium, Stratophanes (*Truculentus*) considers breaking the ankles of all the women in her house (638) before shrugging off his rejection. Pyrgopolinices (*Miles*), rejected by the free sex laborer Philocomasium, physically abducts her against her will and takes her to Ephesus, where he keeps her sequestered under guard.

The worst of the soldiers is Antamynides (*Poenulus*). Though he has a specific woman in mind for his concubine, Anterastilis, he cares nothing for her personally, seeing women as commodities, not individuals. When the girl turns out to be a citizen, he becomes violently angry and threatens the pimp who has robbed him of a “girlfriend” with a lawsuit (1349–1353). He wants either his money back or a replacement woman. But most of his anger is directed at Anterastilis, as long as he believes her to be enslaved. Full of rage, he wishes she were present, so that he might beat her with his fists (*pugnis*) “like a blackbird, much blacker than the Egyptians” (1289–1291). His masculinity undermined by the “trick” played on him, Antamynides wants to reclaim his power through civic justice – a lawsuit – with a man, and violence with a woman. Unlike the comically undermined and chagrined *milites* in *Miles* and *Truculentus*, Antamynides is unapologetic and implacable, a salient reminder of the dangers of hypermasculinity and of the harsh circumstances in which unprotected women worked. But, as with the rest of Plautus’s soldiers, when threatened by Anterastilis’s newfound relatives, he immediately backtracks, claiming all was in jest (1320–1325): the soldier is full of violence and bluster until his weak victim turns out to have powerful protectors.

Free Women

Younger Women

Plautus stages a wide range of younger citizen women. Three plays feature young married women (*Amphitruo*, *Menaechmi*, *Stichus*), two feature unmarried and raped women (*Aulularia* and *Truculentus*), and one an unmarried and sexually safe woman (*Trinummus*).

These women are all limited by the constraints of gender, age, and status. Their sexuality is passive, existing only for citizen men who initiate it, either through rape or marriage. Whether or not a young citizen woman character may speak on stage is dictated by the genre (which is in turn dictated by cultural norms). In Menander, Plautus, and Terence, unmarried citizen women do not speak, save for pained childbirth cries offstage (as in *Aulularia*), while young married women occasionally do. A visible speaking role would compromise the respectability of the young, unmarried, citizen woman character.

Rape was one way for Roman New Comedy playwrights to increase the dramatic impact of citizen girls without compromising the nonspeaking rule, while still providing a way to save the women's sexual status and their kin's respectability. Young citizen women are raped only by young, unmarried citizen men (a generic necessity), who are discovered and made to marry the women. But Plautus rarely stages the rape plot.¹ Instead, he sidesteps the generic convention of the nonspeaking citizen girl by employing a character who can exhibit sexuality outside of marriage and speak, while retaining respectability in the end: the *pseudomeretrix*, a fantasy woman trained in the arts of sexual pleasure but remaining chaste – and therefore marriageable – and defying gendered expectations for the citizen girl, which she will turn out to be. Four of Plautus's plays feature *pseudomeretrices* about to enter into sex labor: Selenium in *Cistellaria*, Planesium in *Curculio*, Adelphasium and Anterastilis in *Poenulus*, and Palaestra in *Rudens*.

Selenium was picked up in the street as an infant and given to a *meretrix*, Melaenis. When she was grown, the citizen Alcesimarchus spied her at a festival to Dionysus and followed her home, offering gifts and favors (89–93). Melaenis allows Selenium to live with Alcesimarchus exclusively (85), until his father orders him to marry a citizen girl. Selenium fell in love with Alcesimarchus and “no other man threatened [her] chastity” (87–88). Similarly, Planesium in *Curculio* desperately loves Phaedromus (he says, 46) and is on the cusp of being made a sex laborer by her *leno*. Nevertheless, she is chaste, save for furtive kisses with Phaedromus (51–52, 57–60). Planesium may be a *virgo*, but she can sweet-talk well as any Plautine *meretrix*, offering tastes of her favors, then requesting that Palinurus buy her (210–214). *Rudens*'s Palaestra is similarly devoted to Plesidippus, who *has* agreed to buy her, but is double-crossed by the *leno*. These women exhibit typical characteristics of *meretrices*, while still yearning for the respectability of exclusive sexual relationships generally unattainable for such women.

The Virgo in *Persa* occupies the liminal space between silent citizen girl and loquacious *pseudomeretrix*. Unmarried, virginal, and protected, she ought not speak, which in young, unmarried women would indicate the active sexuality of a *meretrix*. But, thanks to a Plautine twist, she becomes the only unmarried citizen girl with a large speaking role (Manuwald 2001). Wishing to trick the pimp Dordalus, the enslaved Toxilus asks the *virgo*'s father Saturio to “sell” his daughter into sex slavery (135). Her father agrees, quipping that the girl is three times worse than Toxilus wishes already (152–153), a comment that begins her transformation from respectable, unmarried citizen woman to outspoken sex laborer. He will fit her up in foreign clothes, turn her over to a friend disguised as a foreign slaver, then come back to fetch her before anything happens (157–164; Hardy 2005). Saturio's casual attitude toward his daughter's safety and his comments on her “badness” make the viewer unsure what to expect from this girl. When she appears onstage, however, she is sensible, assertive, and clever. Virgo cautions Saturio against his

plans, citing reputation and modesty, both of which may be lost if he continues. For all her good arguments, her father dismisses her as annoying (*odiosa*, 349). In a last-ditch effort, she reminds her father that she has no dowry, only reputation, and he is risking that (382–389; Richlin 2015, pp. 41–44).

Plautus underscores the *virgo*'s liminality and autonomy through her anonymity: she has no given name known to us, so she can be both Virgo and Persa, and her costume changes reify either identity. As Virgo, she speaks for Roman *mores* and gendered conventions for women, embodying ideology about women even as she violates it by speaking. But when she becomes Persa, the Persian girl, a woman sold into slavery, she performs the attitude and wittiness of a *meretrix*, a woman who must trade on her sexuality. Her beauty, rather than her *pudicitia*, is her greatest asset. Toxilus marvels at how well she plays her part (622) – she has become a *virgo callida* to rival even his cleverness (Lowe 1989). She fake-cries and banters with the pimp, taking his vulgar jokes in stride (656–657). For all her brilliant acting, however, Virgo is in a vulnerable position. If she enters the pimp's house as a slave woman, even for a minute, she will be rendered unmarriageable. The entire plot hangs on Toxilus's ability to keep her in sight after Dordalus buys her and before her father appears. Only dramatic contrivance saves her: Dordalus asks Toxilus to watch her while he sees to things inside (720–721), and even then, Saturio fails to show up without a reminder (724–725). When he arrives, she becomes Virgo once more, and retreats into her role as a young, unmarried citizen girl, unspeaking and withdrawing. Her abrupt departure serves to transition her back into conventional sexuality: having transgressed the norms of gender and status, she must be removed from the action to recoup her sexual reputation.

Older Women

Roman comedy's *senex* is gray and aged (*Menaechmi*'s *senex* provides an excellent example, 753–760), but his wife would be younger, given Roman marriage customs (Saller 1987). The married mother of an *adulescens* may be as young as 35, and likely no older than 45. Regardless of actual age, a standard “woman” mask with gray hair would have distinguished the comic older woman.² Her husband finds her odorous and disgusting: Demaenetus in *Asinaria* says he would rather imbibe “seasickness” (vomit) than smell his wife's breath and kiss her (894–895). The elderly enslaved Scapha in *Mostellaria* urges her young charge not to wear makeup or perfumes, because they are for ugly, smelly, old women (273–278). The desirability, or lack thereof, of the comic *uxor* is a product of the dramatic convention of unhappiness in marriage among the older men of comedy: older men hate their wives, and so the older woman of comedy is undesirable, regardless of her former attractiveness as a *virgo* (both Philippa in *Epidicus* and Phanostrata in *Cistellaria* were raped as young women).

As older-generation *uxores*, these women have served their purpose in bearing children and should no longer demonstrate active sexuality, by Roman standards. But New Comedy's *uxores* defy convention, seeking sexual attention, though they confine their desires to marriage, unlike their husbands. Artemona in *Asinaria* rebukes her husband for “plowing someone else's field, while leaving his own untilled” (874), a phrase that suggests her own sexual needs. Simo (*Mostellaria*) claims his wife made him a good lunch to

lure him into bed, but he escaped (because sex with old wives is unappealing; 692–696; 702–705). While most of the comic cast accepts convention (older woman = undesirable), Plautus reminds us in *Mercator* that the older woman is not universally disgusting. Confusing the older *uxor* Dorippa for the purported concubine of his employer, the cook says that even though she is getting on in years, she has a nice figure, she is not bad, and she will make a good concubine (755–757). We may suspect that the rest of the older-generation *uxores* are equally tolerable, when not viewed through the perspective of their irritable or philandering husbands.

Though *senes* misrepresent their domestic activities as intrusive or oppressive, older *uxores* conform to cultural expectations for their gender and social roles. Roman wives produced legitimate children, saw to their moral instruction (Hemelrijk 1999), kept house and managed the slaves (D'Ambra 2006), and wanted their husbands to behave according to expectations for their age and class as well (Krauss 2004). Cleostrata (*Casina*) takes the administration of domestic staff very seriously, while Artemona (*Asinaria*) is also a businesswoman, having sold some donkeys at a tidy profit. Dorippa (*Mercator*) happily manages her own affairs in the countryside until suspicion about her husband's behavior draws her to town. The *uxor dotata* wielded considerable domestic authority by bearing a male heir for her husband and bringing money to the marriage. Conforming to all these expectations gave her legitimate authority to police her husband, especially when he failed to perform his own socially determined role. Comic *uxores dotatae* do not want their husbands to have extramarital sex because of the personal affront and waste of household funds, but their husbands' advanced ages give wives justification for preventing such affairs. The audience enjoys the husbands' humiliation, because at their age they should have grown out of such behavior. Only the *matrona* in *Menaechmi* is faulted for hindering her husband's affair, because he is young enough (called *adulescens* at 788–791) to make that activity permissible.

The older *uxores* also exert influence outside of marriage. Eunomia (*Aulularia*) easily persuades her brother, Megadorus, first to marry, then *not* to (120–164; 686–687). Philippa (*Epidicus*), despite not having seen Periphanes since her rape and the birth of their now-grown daughter, knows exactly how to manage him. She “aims the sharp edge of her speech against him” and uses “woman's wiles” (546–547). Philippa swoons and manipulates him, winning Periphanes's help in finding their abducted daughter (526–569; James 2015). Plautus's older-generation *uxores* are not submissive. They know how far to push the limitations of their gender and authority, and they do not shirk from punishing wrongdoing in their families. Even in difficult situations they competently manage things, to far greater effect than their hapless husbands.

Meretrices

Free or freed *meretrices* occupied the bottom of the social ladder. Though both free and enslaved women worked in sex labor, their situations were very different: both were subject to clients' demands, but free *meretrices* ostensibly had the right of refusal. They could not be trafficked legally (the free *meretrix* in *Miles* is abducted against her will), they had personal autonomy (as the flute girl in *Epidicus* proudly proclaims, 496–498), and they could choose their clients (one of the Bacchis sisters in *Bacchides* changes her mind about

taking on a long-term contract). The lives of free and enslaved *meretrices* may not have been radically different, but the right to choose must not be underestimated (for the importance of this distinction to unprotected women, see Witzke 2015).

Noncitizen *meretrices* lacked the protections of citizen women; often their only option was sex labor (like Chrysis in Terence's *Andria*). Their sexuality was both commodity and necessity: the only appropriate extramarital outlets for men's sexuality were enslaved persons and free *meretrices*. While the enslaved person was always available and could not refuse, a free *meretrix* had the power of consent, which made pursuit more titillating and disconcerting for her customers, who were used to the citizen man's privilege of always getting his way (James 2005). Without the gendered restrictions of the unmarried citizen girl, the *meretrix* can freely speak in New Comedy, as object in the love plot or an alternative to the clever slave, the *meretrix callida*. Her free speech symbolizes her active and available sexuality: she deploys sweet-talk (*blanditiae*) to entice her clients, as well as manage them.

There are two types of free, noncitizen *meretrix* in Plautus's comedy: the young *meretrix* working under a *lena* (Philaenium in *Asinaria*, Gymnasium in *Cistellaria*), and the *meretrix* running a household (Bacchis I in *Bacchides*, Erotium in *Menaechmi*, Acroteleutium in *Miles*, and Phronesium in *Truculentus*; see Chapter 11). The former is free, but obligated to serve her mother, even against to her own wishes. Philaenium (*Asinaria*) wants to be with Argyrippus, but her mother knows that a sex laborer cannot live on love alone (196–203). Gymnasium (*Cistellaria*) similarly serves her mother, who knows they would starve if her daughter did not take on many clients (40–45, 78–81). The noncitizen *meretrix* has no hope of finding long-lost citizen parents and marrying her true love: she must earn her money by her body.

The *meretrix callida* is a Plautine innovation, as far as we can tell. While many plays feature the *servus callidus* with heroic *malitia* ("badness": Anderson 1993), the *meretrix callida* occasionally can steal the show. Unlike the enslaved *meretrix* dependent on impressing one man enough to buy her from a *leno*, the free *meretrix* with her own household spends her time juggling many men to earn for her retirement. She manipulates naïve *adulescentes*, manages hostile slaves and fathers, and carefully balances client jealousy. The Bacchis sisters triumphantly fleece the *senes amatores* at the end of *Bacchides* (1120–1206), but it is Phronesium of *Truculentus*, along with her *ancilla* Astaphium, who schools both the men and the audience about the life of a free *meretrix*. Diniarchus denounces the greed of *meretrices* and bemoans the lengths to which men must go to please them (22–76), but his complaints are stereotypical of the citizen man's perspective. Phronesium and Astaphium offer a *meretrix*'s perspective on the complex workings of her compulsory active sexuality. Men want an attractive woman, and they do not want competition for her, but at the same time they begrudge her upkeep, forcing her to seek out additional clients. Phronesium must secure the soldier who wants her to be his exclusive concubine while also keeping the interest of silly *adulescentes* out to spend their fathers' money, without alienating any of her clients.

In order to serve clients, a *meretrix* had to open her house to them. Her sexuality, therefore, made her vulnerable to violence and theft (Witzke 2016, pp. 265–270). Astaphium highlights the problems of letting a client into the house: he will bring his friends, who, while the *meretrix* is distracted, will rob the place and eat up the food (95–106). These

clients may also become violent, like the soldiers discussed above. A *meretrix* faced other problems resultant of active sexuality: numerous clients meant numerous sexual encounters in a time when birth control was more hope than healthcare (Lefkowitz and Fant 2016, pp. 306–309). A *meretrix* could become pregnant and, at best, lose income during her pregnancy and recovery, or, at worst, die in childbirth. Men could also urge *meretrices* to have abortions (as noted by Astaphium, 200–201), which were nearly as dangerous as pregnancy (cf. *Ov. Am.* 2.13).

Meretrices' sexuality forced them to occupy a liminal place between ideologies. Their active sexuality required public performance – they had to put their bodies and voices in the masculine sphere and assertively demand clients and payment, but at the same time carefully perform demure submission to men. Citizen wives could resist this expectation, as Cleostrata in *Casina* notes, 585–586). The *meretrices* could not afford to behave according to the gender roles of citizen women, and they were scorned by married citizen women who believed that *meretrices* would seduce their husbands (cf. *Cist.* 27–37). But it was the desire for extramarital sex among citizen women's husbands and sons that necessitated a *meretrix*'s active, publicly demonstrated sexuality. Nor do the dramatic *meretrices* perform sexuality independent of their profession: sexual pleasure exists from the citizen man's perspective alone.

Enslaved Men

Servi

Enslaved men's sexuality was both exploited and exploitative. They could be forced to submit sexually to their masters, but only rarely in Plautus. The *puer* enslaved to the *leno* Ballio in *Pseudolus* laments his lack of funds; in order to purchase a birthday gift for Ballio, he must submit to oral or anal intercourse, the latter of which he fears (767–789; Jocelyn 2000; Kwintner 1992). Men had a limited period of attractiveness as passive sexual objects, according to Roman social conventions (Richlin 1992, pp. 34–44), so the *puer* would eventually have outgrown exploitation, but these conventions were ideological and framed according to the norms of Roman masculine sexuality. Although the poets suggest that desirability ends when a man is no longer a *puer*, this standard was by no means absolutely representative of real Roman sexual practices (Williams 1999, p. 31). Enslaved men – perpetual *pueri* because of their enslavement – could be, and likely were, exploited sexually at any time (Richlin 1993, p. 536).

Casina offers a glimpse into past and current sexual exploitation of enslaved men in the house of the lecherous *senex* Lysidamus. Chalinus is surprised to see Lysidamus embracing, fondling, and kissing Chalinus's enslaved rival Olympio, but he concludes that Olympio must have leveraged sex for a promotion to overseer (455 and 460). He then remembers when he was cornered by Lysidamus trying to penetrate him: “He had wanted to make me the butler of the backdoor” (462). When Lysidamus continues his amorous behavior with Olympio, Chalinus concludes that “these men will entwine their feet,” (a euphemism for sexual intercourse) and remarks that “this old man is certainly accustomed to chasing bearded men” (465–466). Chalinus's remark further characterizes the oversexed

Lysidamus: at his age he should not be chasing young girls, but his libido is so uncontrolled that he pursues even bearded men past the traditional point of desirability (Williams 1999, pp. 77–81).

Despite their enslavement, many *servi* demonstrate active sexuality through pursuit of *meretrices*, as well as *conservae* (fellow enslaved women): the power of their (masculine) gender transcends status. The young men of *Asinaria*, *Bacchides*, *Mostellaria*, and *Pseudolus* all visit *meretrices* with their *servi* to enjoy wine and women together. Leonida and Libanus decide to help the young man Argyrippus because they are drinking buddies (*Asin.* 270). Grumio accuses the *servus callidus* Tranio of acting like a master, partying and visiting *meretrices* (*Mostell.* 15–37). *Adulscientes* and their *servi* were of different status as free and enslaved, but they shared a kind of servitude: young men did not control their own money under the *lex Plaetoria*, and they were all under the control of their *paterfamilias*, who had the power of life and death over his children and his slaves. While *adulscientes* did not fear physical abuse, they were as spatially and financially limited as their *servi*, and so they may have socialized on somewhat equal terms.

Sosia in *Amphitryo*, Toxilus in *Persa*, and the titular Stichus all have hired “girlfriends.” The titular Truculentus despises *meretrices*, but by play’s end he has fallen for quick-witted Astaphium and scrounged up the money to hire her (675–697). Stichus and his friend Sangarinus are rivals in the model of the *adulscientes inamorati* at a dinner party with their *amica* (430–434). The titular Pseudolus, in celebration of his successful swindling, receives a girl and a dinner. *Persa* takes the theme a step further: Plautus foregoes the young-man-in-love/*servus-callidus*-to-the-rescue plot and eliminates the *adulscens* entirely. The *servus callidus* Toxilus is himself *inamoratus* (1–6), and he plots on his own behalf (50–52), eventually swindling the pimp out of the money needed to purchase and free his *amica*.

A few *servi* sexually exploit *conservae* and *meretrices*, inappropriately touching or forcing the women to sweet-talk them. *Asinaria*’s Leonida insists that *meretrix* Philaenium call him affectionate names and kiss him, then urges Libanus to take a turn (666–668, 679). Similarly, enslaved Sceparnio in *Rudens* lusts for enslaved sex laborer Ampelisca; after she is shipwrecked nearby, he refuses her water unless she submits to fondling (431). She angrily pushes him off as he touches her breasts, strokes her body, and gestures at his crotch (417–429). When he refuses to help unless she coaxes him, Ampelisca, resigned, says, “Oh sure, my pleasure, I’ll do whatever you want” (436).

Casina features the most blatant sexual exploitation of a *serva* by her *conservi*. When enslaved Casina reaches puberty, she is pursued by her master Lysidamus, his son Euthynicus, and their slaves Olympio and Chalinus. Lysidamus wants Olympio to marry Casina so that he might have *ius primae noctis*. Olympio, wanting both his master’s favor and sexual access to Casina, agrees to help. Though Chalinus is less overtly lascivious, he is still willing to marry Casina so that *his* master Euthynicus may have sexual access to her as well. At the end of the play, Lysidamus and Olympio attempt to gang rape Casina (Chalinus in disguise); both jostle to fondle “her” (840–854), and “Casina” pushes and kicks them, refusing consent. Excited rather than deterred by her struggle, Lysidamus and Olympio vie to be the first to have sex with her, only to be physically (and perhaps sexually) assaulted by “Casina” (875–960). Despite their own sexual exploitation, both Chalinus and Olympio are eager to sexually exploit and even assault their *conserva*.

Enslaved Women

Ancillae and Enslaved Meretrices

In addition to sexually servicing other *servi*, enslaved women are often forced to serve their masters, *lenones*, and clients. Many *ancillae* are often by necessity *meretrices*, compounding their duties. Stephanium in *Stichus* rents herself out on the side (674–end), while the unnamed *ancilla* in *Menaechmi* flirts with her *domina*’s client to get presents (her only way to earn money, 524–548). The hypothetical fate of Pasicompsa in *Mercator* highlights the dual role of the attractive *ancilla* in the household: she must weave, grind meal, cut wood, spin, sweep, cook, and take a beating (395–399), and would also be the object of the lust of the neighborhood, watched, winked and whistled at, pinched, called, and serenaded (James 2010; Marshall 2015). Desired by both father and son, Pasicompsa is finally given to the latter for his use (989). A similar fate awaits Acropolistis, purchased as a live-in sex slave for the fickle Stratippocles (653). These women have no capacity to consent (or not) to such relationships, and unlike free *meretrices*, they have the added expectation of physical labor on top of sex labor (cf. Cato the Elder’s in-house brothel, Plutarch, *Cat. Mai.* 21.1).

Enslaved *meretrices* were forced to work for pimps who exploited them until they were sold or no longer profitable. These women could be sold to men they disliked, trafficked to other lands, beaten for failing to bring in high profits, or demoted to terrible conditions like the *pergulum* (a hut or room where a low-cost sex laborer was worked to death). The number of passive verbs I have employed here should emphasize the passive sexuality of the enslaved *meretrix*: her gender and status give her little agency to act.

Many of Plautus’s plots included enslaved *meretrices* (for a complete list, see Witzke 2015, p.10), but *Pseudolus* best highlights the precarious position of the enslaved *meretrix*. Ballio, wishing his slave women to bring in greater profits, threatens them with low-class clients (178), torture (198–201), and the *pergulum* (214, 229). Phoenicium, preferring exclusivity with Calidorus, begs him to buy her. When another man comes for her, she weeps as she is led away (1039), as does Pasicompsa in *Mercator* in similar circumstances (501–502). Enslaved *meretrices* were vulnerable to the whims of their *leno*, his friends (as in *Rudens*, when the *leno*’s companion convinces him to abscond with a girl he has already sold), and their clients, and had neither legal protection nor right of refusal.

Enslaved *meretrices* had only one hope for changing their status; namely, convincing their clients to purchase them for exclusive use, or perhaps to free them. But *meretrices* freed by their customers were still on the hook for sexual service: they owed *fides et obsequium* (faith and obedience) to their new patrons. Toxilus purchases and frees Lemniselenis to be his freedwoman *meretrix* in *Persa*, though he is enslaved himself. Once she has been purchased from the *leno*, the dynamic of their relationship changes. When she tries to resist his orders, he harshly reminds her that he is her patron, having paid for her freedom, and chastened, she agrees to do as he asks (842–843); freed, Lemniselenis still lives on another’s terms. The same is true of Philematium in *Mostellaria*. Though Scapha urges her to find many lovers to save for her lonely retirement, Philematium refuses out of loyalty to her new patron, who expects her sole attention (204–205). Such episodes highlight the gross inequality of freed men and women. When the titular Epidicus is freed for useful

service to his master, he earns shoes, a tunic, a cloak, and food; women are freed only for the desirability of their bodies, which they must continue to use or risk their patrons' disapproval and their own starvation. It is only through the occasional voiced dissent (as with Pardalisca in *Casina* or Astaphium in *Truculentus*; Andrews 2004) that we see these women express their own subjectivity.

NOTES

- 1 Plautus includes younger-generation rape, Scafuro's term (1990), only in *Aulularia* and *Truculentus*, and older-generation rape in *Cistellaria* and *Epidicus*, and in none of these plots is rape of primary importance. Terence, by contrast, prominently features rape in half of his plays.
- 2 Her face could be twisted and wrinkled, like masks 28–30 ("old woman") in Pollux's list (*Onomasticon* 4: 143–54; Webster 1949), though these seem more appropriate to the old nurse or *lena* of New Comedy. Marshall (2006) argues that by the era of New Comedy the dramatic masks for all women were simplified down to mere hair color.

FURTHER READING

For an introduction to ancient Greek and Roman sexualities, see Hubbard (2014), Ormand (2009), and Skinner (2014). Lape (2004) and Traill (2008) explore the impact of status and gender in the sexual lives of Menander's characters, while James (2013) offers an analysis of the interplay of gender and status in the power struggles of Terence's dysfunctional families. Cantarella (2002) and Krauss (2004) should be consulted on citizen marital relations. On the sexual exploitation of enslaved and freedpersons in Plautus, see Richlin (2017).

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Owners and Slaves in and Around Plautus

Amy Richlin

Things change. As Eduard Fraenkel said, “[The slave’s] part increases in importance and length. This is an essential feature of Plautus’s entire oeuvre” (2007, p. 166). Slave characters in early Roman comedy took center stage; this development belongs to a historical context of pan-Mediterranean warfare in the 200s BCE involving frequent incidents of mass enslavement. In unprecedented numbers, free people became slaves, while any slaves sold to Roman owners, when freed, became Roman citizens. Some slaves owned slaves, and many owners had been slaves. In this world, slavery affected everyone, and the status quo was never static.

Historical Context

In the 200s BCE, all over the Mediterranean, armies that sacked towns usually treated as spoils whatever inhabitants they chose not to kill, primarily women, children, and those already enslaved (Welwei 2000). Some towns’ inhabitants were allowed to leave as refugees; the wealthy might be allowed to ransom themselves. After Alexander, the ongoing wars of his successors, the Diadochoi, fed a booming slave trade along the coast of Asia Minor and the Black Sea, northwestward into Thrace, and southwestward into Egypt and Cyrene; farther west, Carthage participated in this market (Lewis 2018). At the same time, the large-scale wars of the Italian peninsula and Sicily merely from the Roman perspective included the Third Samnite War (297–290), the war against Pyrrhus (280–275), the First Punic War (264–241), the invasion of Sardinia (235), the First Illyrian War (229), invasions from the north by Celtic tribes in 295 and 225–222, the Second Punic War (220–202), and the First Macedonian War (214; all ancient dates BCE unless otherwise noted). The century ended with the start of the Second Macedonian War. In smaller-scale

engagements, Roman armies crushed local centers like Sarsina in Umbria, where Plautus is said to have come from (266). Captured soldiers were sometimes sold into slavery, as happened to 10 000 Romans taken by Hannibal at Cannae (Polyb. 3.117.3).¹ The other Italian and Sicilian cities engaged in their own battles; the Celts sold defeated enemies into slavery (Zonar. 8.19; Diod. Sic. 5.26.3). One of the leaders of the Mercenary War in Carthage (240–238) is said to have been a Campanian, a runaway Roman slave named Spendios (Polyb. 1.69.4).

These circumstances coexisted with a flourishing traffic in commodities, including slaves, and created a landscape of food shortages, debt, income inequality, class struggle, and poverty among fixed and refugee populations. An economy of predation fed on both, by land and sea. In Italy, these forces moved people from the north and south across the Latin language line into central Italy and moved Latin outward into new Roman colonies: *barbaria*, as Plautus (*Poen.* 598) calls this small Latin-speaking territory.

All these factors affected the demography of writers, actors, musicians, and audiences. Of the other writers of the early *palliata*, Livius Andronicus is said to have come from Tarentum and has a probable freed-slave name; Naevius fought in the First Punic War; Ennius came from remote, tiny Rudiae in Calabria and was proudly trilingual (Latin, Oscan, Greek); Caecilius Statius is said to have been an Insubrian Gaul, likewise with a freed-slave name. At least some actors were slaves, as attested by jokes in Plautus, and Plautus's one known musician was a slave, the *tibicen* Marcipor Oppii (see Cheesman 2009 on his name). If audiences represented the population, they were mixed in class, gender, and civil status, and the *Poenulus* prologue directly addresses prostitutes, (generic) slaves, wet-nurses, married women (*matronae*), and slave attendants (*pedisequi*). A century of mass enslavement, a fifteen-year invasion by mixed Carthaginian forces, and the standard practice whereby soldiers raped captive women (Gaca 2014) must have produced a population hybrid to some degree.

Circulation, then, both voluntary (trade, travel) and involuntary (the slave trade) fostered the movement of cultural forms around the Mediterranean, from Greece north to Macedonia and around the coast of Asia Minor and North Africa to Sicily, then northward into Italy. Jokes and comedy travel both orally and in the bodies of performers; the route is attested as far as Alexandria for comic performers like Stratonicus (Richlin 2016). Sicily, meanwhile, was a hotbed of comic creation back to Epicharmus in the 480s, and exchanges between Sicily and Athens are well attested. There is no trace of the highly professionalized Greek actors, the Dionysiac *tekhnitai*, north of Sicily in the 200s; however (Le Guen 2014), the existence of comic formulae in Latin in the few fragments of Livius Andronicus (Richlin 2018), together with the slave status of some performers known from Rome, suggests the gradual development of a Latin-language comedy by performers traveling between southern and central Italy from the early 200s BCE onward, boosted by the slave trade: the *palliata*.

In Greek dress: how Greek? Comic forms ongoing in revival used slaves onstage in different ways that fed into the *palliata* via the varied skill-sets of comedians. The late plays of Aristophanes display central slaves in *Frogs* (405) and *Wealth* (408, 388), and Old Comedy slaves engage somewhat in what C.W. Marshall calls “shtickomythia” (2006, p. 193) – back-and-forth joking. This is found also in Middle Comedy, especially in the fragments of Antiphanes, but only rarely in New Comedy, at least in the remains of Menander.

New Comedy contributes plots, titles, and character types. The literary mimes of Herodas, from Alexandria, feature a savage treatment of slaves perhaps derived from street mimes (duBois 2010, pp. 94–97), and a joke in Herodas shows up in Plautus's *Stichus* (Richlin 2018); traces of *gelôtopoioi* attest to a form of standup, traces of the *thaumata* (street entertainment) attest to young slaves trained in dance, while slaves in Plautus do Ionian dances (Moore 2012, pp. 106–114). All these forms evolved through the upheavals of the fifth-century Greek city-states (Raaflaub 2014) and the assaults on them by Philip, Alexander, and the Diadochoi (Lape 2004), but as they moved west and amalgamated, they fused with local forms and took on Italocentric geography and rules, and the meanings of the storylines shifted.

Philip V of Macedon in 214 pointed out to the citizens of Larisa that the Romans strengthened their citizen body by enfranchising freed slaves (Burstein 1985, pp. 87–88). The rules of Roman slavery govern much onstage action in the plays of Plautus, action facilitated precisely by the fluid nature of civil status (Watson 1971, pp. 44–53). The word *erus* (fem. *era*) is best translated “owner” rather than “master” (Richlin 2017b, pp. 22–24), since onstage slavery is treated as a temporary state that could be paid off. It is an error to think of central Italian city populations, or audiences, as divided into “citizen slave-owners” vs. “slaves,” since freed slaves became citizens, slaves could own slaves (as, in *Persa*, Toxilus owns Paegnium, Lemniselenis owns Sophoclidisca, or as the false *atriensis* in *Asinaria* owns a slave named Stichus), and many inhabitants of these cities would have had enslaved kin, civilian or military. As Matthew Leigh says, “large numbers of Romans of the age of Plautus had experienced slavery from both sides” (2004, p. 88). In Rome the census divided the citizen body into property brackets, while the third decade of Livy's history is peppered with accounts of class warfare in other Italian cities. In short, to speak of the audience as “Romans” homogenizes a highly differentiated group. Slaves onstage not only claim legal personhood (*Asin.* 490) but consider themselves members of the *populus*, as when the slave Trachalio in *Rudens* performs a *quiritatio* on behalf of two slave prostitutes, appealing to his fellow city-dwellers (*populares*) for help (615–626). In the Roman army and navy, male slaves worked alongside soldiers and rowed alongside the lowest-class citizens (Richlin 2017a; Welwei 1988, pp. 5–18, 28–42, 56–80), much as slave and free craftsmen worked together making pottery in the Roman colony of Cales (Morel 1989, pp. 484–487).

The vocabulary of fluid civil status marks slaves' storylines. By legal convention, slaves could accumulate assets into a *peculium*, a discretionary fund; slaves onstage seek money by which to augment their *peculium* and so purchase their freedom, like the Slave of Lyconides in *Aulularia* (816–817), or the fisherman Gripus in *Rudens* (924–929), or the prostitute Phoenicium in *Pseudolus* (225). The *lorarius* in *Captivi* is taunted by his owner with not having enough money saved up (120), while the slave Stalagmus, at the end of this play, remarks bitterly that his own lack of money makes it appropriate that he be put in chains again (1028). Toxilus threatens Paegnium: *peculiabo*, “I'm going to give you an advance on your allowance”; Paegnium responds that everyone says owners have the *fides* of a slut (*Pers.* 192–194). It is a virtue in a slave to be *frugi* (“prudent”), so that the price of manumission can be earned quickly. Despite the commonly-repeated assertion, sparked by Erich Segal (1968, p. 164), that Plautine slaves do not want to be freed, manumission is often wished for by slave characters onstage, and slaves of unknown

parentage are freed in *Aulularia* (probably, the Slave of Lyconides), *Epidicus* (Epidicus, onstage, at length; probably the prostitute Acropolistis, offstage, but see *contra* Marshall 2015, p. 132), *Menaechmi* (Messenio, onstage, at length), *Miles Gloriosus* (Palaestrio, promised), *Mostellaria* (the prostitute Philematium, just prior to the action), *Persa* (the prostitute Lemniselenis, offstage), *Pseudolus* (Phoenicium, offstage), and *Rudens* (Ampelisca and Gripus, promised; Trachalio, offstage). In addition, as is well known, numerous enslaved persons onstage turn out to be freeborn and are recognized as such: the soldier Philocrates's slave Tyndarus in *Captivi*, the unseen household slave Casina in *Casina*, the prostitute Planesium in *Curculio*, the captive sex slave Telestis in *Epidicus*, the fictional captive Lucris in *Persa*, the prostitutes Adelphasium and Anterastilis in *Poenulus*, the prostitute Palaestra in *Rudens*, and probably the girl Soteris in *Vidularia*. The commonness of this plotline suggests how commonly-shared a wish this was among audience members. Other freed slaves onstage bring the tally up to 26 or so, plus the chorus of freed Advocati in *Poenulus* (Rawson 1993). The mechanics of manumission foster jokes like Sosia's wish to have his head shaved and wear the freedman's cap (*Amph.* 462), or Epidicus's insistence on future support by his ex-owner (*Epid.* 724–727), or Messenio's insistence that his owner use the proper legal formula (*Men.* 1029–1032), or the odious soldier's preference for a woman who is not “made free by the rod” (*Mil.* 961) – ironic, since the supposed *matrona* he drools over is in fact a young freed prostitute (789).

Jokes about the physical abuse and torture of slaves are discussed by Holt Parker (1989), who sets the plays in their historical context but posits a monolithic audience of “Romans,” all slave-owners, whose fears of a slave uprising are assuaged by laughing at the threats made onstage. Parker also follows another misleading claim of Segal's (1968, p. 152): “no slave is ever ill-treated during a comedy.” Although no slave onstage is crucified or otherwise put to death, slaves onstage are put in bonds (*Bacch.* 799–862, *Capt.* 1–355, *Epid.* 684–731) or appear in bonds, having just been flogged (the Ancilla and Syra, *Truc.* 771–838), and they express pain (*Capt.* 200, *Truc.* 783), as Ballio's slaves do when he flogs them (onstage, *Pseud.* 154–155). Moreover, slaves are often struck onstage, marked by the phrase *em tibi* (“There you go!”) or the command *vapula* (“Take that!”). The sexual abuse of slaves also serves as a major plot element and source of black comedy onstage, for there is no real distinction between household slaves and sex slaves in respect to sexual vulnerability (Marshall 2015). Male as well as female slaves are the target of owners' onstage groping (*Cas.* 451–466); a child prostitute laments his plight in a monologue (*Pseud.* 767–789); Paegnium is working his way to freedom by prostituting himself (*Pers.* 284–286). Jokes by male slaves about each other's status as sex objects are at least as frequent as jokes about prostitutes and much more frequent than jokes about female household slaves, perhaps due to the actors' perspective (probably all male). A third form of abuse, deprivation of food, likewise serves as a source of onstage joking by slave characters, often associated with stingy owners, like the joke shared by Herodas (*Mim.* 6.2–8) and Plautus (*Stich.* 58–61). Like physical abuse, hunger is an affliction shared by slave characters and *parasiti*, who in Plautus retain from Greek comedy mainly their function as standup comedians who earn their meals by entertaining at rich men's dinners. This focus on hunger across status lines must have resonated with audiences for whom the same was true (Garnsey 1999, pp. 43–61).

Roman naming practice, if used onstage, would have differentiated characters according to status, but it was not. The consistent use of Greek character names is one of the most marked retentions in the *palliata*, along with the costumes and ostensible settings. Male Roman citizens had a *praenomen* (only 17 options), a *nomen* (family name), and in this period sometimes a *cognomen* (indicator of family branch, or one-off nickname), hence the joke name “T. Maccius Plautus,” while slaves had a single name (like “Marcipor”). Slave names on Republican objects show no pattern of ethnic marking. But everyone in the *palliata* has a single name: normal Greek naming practice. At some level this assimilates them all to slaves. Jokes manifest a consciousness of naming as significant; Sosia, asked to identify himself, says the Thebans call him Sosia, son of Davus (*Amph.* 365), a joke on the natal alienation that denied slaves any legal parent (cf. *Capt.* 574, *Pseud.* 581–582, *Stich.* 281–282, 303–304, 332), and simultaneously a metatheatrical joke on Sosia as the literary descendant of slaves named *Daos* in Greek comedy (appearing in eight plays of Menander alone). The title character in *Stichus* is a slave, and in Roman law “Stichus” is the archetypal slave, the “John Doe” of slaves, but the name Stichus is rarely attested in real life, in either Greek or Latin epigraphy. As shown by Kostas Vlassopoulos (2010), there is no match in frequency between slave names in Greek drama and in the contemporary Greek world (cf. Tordoff 2013, pp. 25–27). Onstage names are stagy and objectifying, especially the sexy names allotted to sex slaves of both genders: “Paegnium” means “Plaything,” “Philematium” means “Little Kissy.” The free and nameless Virgo in *Persa*, masquerading as an Arabian war captive and asked her name, comes up with “Lucris” – “Casha”: a telling joke, for slaves were renamed by dealers, putting the seal on their natal alienation.

What slaves looked like onstage is uncertain: grotesque? Differentiated? The use of grotesque costumes for slaves in Sicilian and southern Italian comedy in the 300s and early 200s is attested by vase paintings and small terracotta figurines; the terracotta masks found on the island of Lipari off the coast of Sicily, faces without context, include some grotesque ones (Bosher 2013; Richlin 2019; Wrenhaven 2013). Male slave figures have padded bellies and buttocks and squashy faces; old (slave) women have padded breasts as well. Extant mosaic floors, the earliest dating only to the first century, display scenes from Greek New Comedy (the characters are labeled), which include a grotesque old woman and a few grotesque male slaves (Gutzwiller & Çelik 2012), and there have been many efforts to tie these mosaics and the Lipari masks with the list of mask types in the *Onomastikon* of Pollux (late 100s CE), with problematic results. There are almost no material depictions of comic actors from central Italy in Plautus’s lifetime, but the exceptions are suggestive. Both come from Praeneste: the handle of a *cista* (bronze urn) in the form of a pair of comic characters, at least one of whom is a probable slave since he carries a lantern (British Museum 1839, 1116.3, mid-200s); and a *cista* showing an elaborate scene of comic cooks, with comic dialogue coming out of their mouths (Brussels Mus. Roy. A 1159; illustrated in Foerst 1978, pp. 16–17, 116–117, and plates 11b–c; after 200). The characters on the handle wear grotesque masks, belly pads, *pallium*, and the usual suit; the cooks wear only a kilt and are unmasked and barefoot. Mime actors? Their dialogue, however, bears a marked lexical resemblance to jokes in Plautus (Richlin 2017b, pp. 15–16 n. 27). That these *cistae* come from Praeneste confirms the impression that the *palliata* traveled.

The plays themselves make much use of deixis, so that characters are described in emphatic detail as they enter; occasional jokes involve the description of a character offstage, and this gives us several detailed descriptions of slaves: “red-headed, pot-bellied, fat-legged, swarthy,/ big-headed, red face, huge feet” (*Pseud.* 1218–20; cf. *Asin.* 400–401, *Capt.* 647–648; Marshall 2006, pp. 133–134, 149–150): grotesque, then. Old women, onstage and off, are consistently described as ugly. Slave-women who are sex objects, on the other hand, are greeted with rapture, indicating masks painted a brilliant white with red lips and cheeks and black-lined eyeholes, to mimic makeup. If the actors were male and their comic portrayal of women can be viewed as drag, then there were several kinds of drag onstage, with at least two kinds of slave-women, plus married women and others (Dutsch 2015; Richlin 2017b, pp. 281–303). There are some signs that skin color marked ethnicity onstage, although these are mainly textual, in jokes about Carthaginians, Syrians, and unspecified North Africans (Starks 2000, 2010). One Lipari mask type, a woman, has African features, but painted white (Richlin 2019, pp. 58–59). A “dark” (usually *ater*) face, in a female character, is sometimes viewed as attractive, but only by a male slave, best seen in the pitcher scene in *Rudens* (414–429, cf. *Poen.* 1112–1113). A Syrian mosaic from the late 200s CE shows a cook with dark brown skin and dreadlocks, but there are no African cooks in Plautus, although there is a joke about “the Ethiopians who carry the bucket around at the Circus” (*Aegyptini*, *Poen.* 1291): certainly slaves. In Italy in this period, as happened in North American blackface, it is entirely possible that a performer of African ancestry wore a black mask.

The Cast of Characters

Onstage, as in the audience, “slaves” is not a monolithic category; slave characters are differentiated not only by age and gender, as seen above, but also by the type of work they do. The sex slave Pasicompsa, as she is led off to yet another new owner, exclaims tearfully that she is not trained to nurse babies, herd sheep, or carry heavy burdens (*baiolare*; *Merc.* 508–509). She is above that, and indeed the *baiolus* serves onstage as a contemptible figure who does work nobody else wants to do: an unskilled laborer (*Poen.* 1301). Cooks, usually servile, are always suspected of thieving, a holdover from Greek comedy. In *Rudens*, the field worker Sceparnio and the fisherman Gripus both rank below the body servant Trachalio: Sceparnio lusts after the slave prostitute Ampelisca, but Trachalio is the one who gets her, along with their freedom; Gripus argues unsuccessfully with Trachalio through long stretches of the play. The old slave-woman Syra carries the luggage of her *era* (*Merc.* 670–671), and Syrian and Egyptian slave-women in general are cast as household drudges: “she’ll grind grain, cook, finish her wool quota, and be flogged” (*Merc.* 416). Overseers onstage – the *lorarii* (“strap-men”) who bind slaves for flogging, the *atriensis* who runs the city house, the *vilicus* who runs the *villa* – are fearsome figures; yet they are themselves slaves, and suffer indignities as such, as well as being mocked for their arrogance. The *vilicus* Olympio in *Casina*, groped by his owner onstage, is beaten up offstage by the cross-dressed “Casina” (875–935); the household slave Leonida in *Asinaria* impersonates the *atriensis*

in a grand show of “playing the owner” (371–376, 403–503). The head *lorarius* in *Captivi*, on the other hand, taunted by his owner, turns around and helps the two bound captives (209–214). Soldiers’ slaves are mimicked for replicating their owners’ arrogance (*Pseud.* 911–1010; cf. *Curc.* 392–452). Household slaves envy others who get better food than they do (*Mil.* 349), suggesting that slaves’ hunger varied according to a household pecking order.

The sexual use of slaves enabled jokes suggesting that household privilege might stem from a quid pro quo, as when Pinacium and Phaniscus taunt each other in *Mostellaria* (887a–895), or the slave Chalinus conjectures that Olympio got his job by allowing the kind of thing he is watching him do with their owner (*Cas.* 460–462). This affected *pueri* (boy slaves) like Phaniscus and Pinacium, or Paegnium in *Persa*, or Stalagmus in *Captivi* (966). The whole plot of *Casina* revolves around the struggle between an old man and his son over who will get to use the sixteen-year-old slave-woman Casina as his sexual property, and each moves toward this goal by promising her to a male slave as a wife (still subject to use by owner). Much more obviously eroticized are the prostitutes owned by pimps: Planesium in *Curculio*; Lemniselenis in *Persa*; Adelphasium and Anterastilis in *Poenulus*; Phoenicium, Hedylium, Aeschrodora, Xytilis, and the unnamed *puer* in *Pseudolus*; Ampelisca and Palaestra in *Rudens* (Marshall 2013). Pimps are uniformly reviled, and *Persa* concludes with the words, “The pimp is done for. Applaud” (*leno perit. plaudite*, 858). Slave-women owned by prostitutes sometimes engage in sex work themselves or were formerly sex slaves: unnamed in *Menaechmi* (541–543), Milphidippa in *Miles Gloriosus*, Scapha in *Mostellaria*, Sophoclidisca in *Persa*, Astaphium in *Truculentus*. Perhaps Scapha, and certainly Acroteleutium in *Miles* and the group in *Cistellaria*, are freedwomen. Some are imports, exotic like the Ethiopian slave-woman and the eunuch in Terence’s *Eunuchus* (165–169, 471): the Virgo as “Lucris” in *Persa*, trafficked to Athens from Arabia by way of Persia, for sale to a pimp; the cargo of female musicians shipped in from Asia in *Stichus* (380–381); the two Syrian women, “queens at home,” given by the Babylonian soldier to the free prostitute Phronesium in *Truculentus* (530–532). They are part of his *praeda*, won in war, just as Telestis in *Epidicus* is bought from the *praeda* by a less successful soldier (43–44). Several of the sex slaves onstage undergo this kind of trafficking between far-flung points on the map; Adelphasium and Anterastilis, kidnapped with their nanny in Carthage, are transported to Anactorium where they are bought by a pimp and taken on to Calydon (*Poen.* 84–95), while Palaestra and Ampelisca are being taken from Cyrene to Sicily, where the market is better, when they are shipwrecked (*Rud.* 53–59). Pasicompsa in *Mercator* is taken from Rhodes to Athens, sold, and resold (James 2010); the pimp has sold Phoenicium “abroad” (*Pseud.* 51–52). This was how trade routes worked in the 200s, as earlier, and there is a strong lexical connection onstage between all trade and the flesh trade.

Phoenicium and her fellow slaves do not have speaking roles, despite their spectacular appearance during the pimp Ballio’s rant (*Pseud.* 133–229), and they constitute the most dramatic example of a large class of slaves onstage: mute characters. In a throwback to Old Comedy, some of these serve in their scenes as eye candy, as do Ballio’s slaves. This is true of the cargo of musicians in *Stichus*, and probably of various nonspeaking *pueri*. Others are well represented by their common associated prop: luggage. Syra in *Mercator* is a rare

example of a slave who enters carrying luggage and turns out to have an important speaking role (compare Xanthias in Aristophanes's *Frogs*); more typical are the mute Carthaginian luggage-carriers in *Poenulus*, the butt of an Orientalizing joke about their earrings (980–981). Mute household slaves escort owners and bring out furniture, food, and drink; some of them have names, like Canthara (“Wine Glass”) in *Epidicus* (567), while others are just *servi* or *vos* (*Capt.* 456, 919, *Cist.* 649, *Poen.* 1319). *Lorarii* likewise are mute or limited to very few lines, usually thick-headed (*Capt.* 658, *Pseud.* 159, *Rud.* 764), which is why the eloquence of the chief *lorarius* in *Captivi* is so surprising: you don’t expect a block(head) to talk.

This brings us to the most famous type of slave onstage: the main character, the *servus callidus*. He (always he) is a surprise, after Greek comedy, as Fraenkel showed; he serves as a stand-in for the playwright, acting as the *architectus* of the plot (Slater 1985, pp. 118–146; Chapters 5, 9, and 24 in this volume). In the world that made these plays, no one would expect a slave to run the show, but run it they do, in *Bacchides*, *Captivi*, *Epidicus*, *Miles Gloriosus*, *Mostellaria*, *Persa*, *Pseudolus*, and parts of *Asinaria* and *Poenulus*: about half the extant plays. The phrase *servus callidus* in fact does *not* appear in the Plautine corpus, nor is *callidus* used particularly of central slaves; half-admiring, sometimes boasting, it colors a range of characters: slaves, prostitutes, a friend (*Pseud.* 385), the Virgo, the Carthaginian Hanno. The phrase is used by modern scholars interchangeably with “clever slave,” but “clever” does not get at the meaning of *callidus*, which is related to *calleo*, “I am tough like an animal’s hide” (Richlin 2017b, pp. 227–228, 393–394). The *callidus* person has learned the hard way, from experience, like the Virgo (*docte calleo*, *Per.* 380) and the *vilicus* Collybiscus (*Poen.* 579). This complex of ideas relates to a whole vocabulary of giving and taking orders onstage, deployed in scenes that enact slaves’ resentment of constantly being ordered about and treated as stupid – and of being beaten – by owners. The *callidus* slave is like the character “John” in African-American slave tales: a bad slave, a trickster who gets away with it (Hurstons 1943). Conversely, the “good slaves” onstage, like Messenio in *Menaechmi*, especially when they make long speeches about their goodness (as they repeatedly do, in similar terms), always have a nasty surprise awaiting them: the Slave of Lyconides in *Aulularia*, Phaniscus in *Mostellaria*, Harpax in *Pseudolus*, Gripus in *Rudens*.

Enacting Freedom

The plays themselves constitute a way in which slave actors could act out scenarios of slave experience for an audience experienced in slavery. Among the experiences they act out are ones in which slaves speak in a veiled way or react with indignation when their speech is suppressed. These situations have a lexicon of their own; veiled speech includes a mode of speech strongly associated with slaves in the plays – and once in a while, with other relatively powerless people – muttering under one’s breath, semi-audible vocalization, denoted by the verbs *murmuro*, *muissito*, *musso*, and *muttio*, and by the noun *muttitio*. Most of these speeches are complaints. Speech has a scale of audibility, from commands (imperatives in particular belong to owners) to *loquor* (“I’m saying”) and *narro* (“I’m telling”) to *muttio* (“I’m saying to myself”) to *taceo* (“I’m keeping silent”).

Conversely, *audin* – “are you listening?” – belongs to the person giving orders, while an obedient person is said to be *dicto audiens*: the actors, then, command the audience (Moore 1998). Owners onstage are hard of hearing: the slave speaks, the owner says, “Are you still muttering?” (*etiam muttis?*), uncomprehending; the audience, however, can hear every word. On a larger scale, Tranio in *Mostellaria* acts this out with two old men who are incapable of seeing the nonexistent wall painting he is describing – actually an account of how he is fooling them – and he chalks this up to their failing eyesight. They are befuddled; the audience sees his point (832–840). Slaves also engage widely in double speech – that is, lines with double meanings, often meant to go over the head of an owner or free person whose power the slave is resisting; the audience, on the other hand, is meant to understand, once again being placed in cahoots with the slave. Some of these lines are axioms, whose meaning is doubled not within the scenario but by their applicability to real life, as when the slave Milphio tells his owner, “It’s an outrage on your part to let your own fellow-citizens / be slaves before your eyes, when they were free at home” (*nam tuom flagitiumst tuas te popularis pati / servire ante oculos, domi quae fuerint liberae*, *Poen.* 965–966). Such lines would acquire a second layer of meaning if accompanied by a nod to the audience, and there are stories of actors later in Roman history who used such ploys, like the equestrian mime-writer Decimus Laberius: forced by Julius Caesar to act in one of his own plays, he is said to have played the slave Syrus and spoken the line, “To the rescue, Roman citizens! We are losing our liberty” (*porro, Quirites, libertatem perdimus*, frg. 91 Panayotakis; cf. Bartsch 1994, pp. 72, 238 n. 21). This is a *quiritatio*, like Trachalio’s (above), and liberty is still the issue.

Sometimes slaves’ language onstage is not veiled at all, as in the numerous instances when slaves say to their owners, “You’re stupid” (*stultu*’s). This kind of blatant disrespect rises to its dramatic peak when the slave Libanus climbs on his owner’s back and rides him like a horse (*Asin.* 698–710). Slaves point out that wealthy owners are unacquainted with hard work (*Amph.* 170); they are stingy, especially with food (*Pers.* 266–267); they spoil their children (*Bacch.* 440–445). Two slave-women in *Truculentus* – one named Syra, the other unnamed – defy Syra’s owner, who has just had them flogged, and tell him who is to blame for his daughter’s rape (810–825). Another Syra delivers an editorial on equal rights for married women (*Merc.* 817–829; James 2012). Epidicus makes his owner beg to manumit him (728–731), and the *grex* asks the audience to applaud (732–733); Pseudolus makes his owner cry (1320). Slaves get even. Moreover, they claim the moral high ground, despite Moses Finley’s claim (1998 [1980], p. 188): “Never did the slave, for all his superiority as an intriguer, exceed his master in morality.” This is easily falsifiable, as when Syncerastus, a pimp’s slave, disgustingly describes the scene inside his owner’s house, where *equites* wallow next to freedmen and runaway slaves (*Poen.* 830–843); or when the slave Stasimus delivers an editorial on the way the *mos maiorum* has been corrupted by the current ruling class (*Trin.* 1028–1058). Among elaborate utopian fantasies of freedom onstage, the Sycophanta in *Trinummus* describes heaven as a place where Jupiter has gone out to the *villa* to bring food to the slaves (944), a reversal of the usual economic model. There are still slaves in heaven, however, and even the slightly less fantastical hopes of the slave Gripus include buying “a field and a house and slaves” (*Rud.* 930).

Scholarly Controversies and Future Directions

Most Latin literature after Plautus was written from the perspective of the Roman ruling class; scholars, especially since the late 1960s, have been careful to take that bias into account, and Finley flagged all “literature” as risky for historians of slavery (1998 [1980], p. 185):

I have sedulously avoided any reference to overt statements in ancient literature about the psychology of slaves, for the simple reason that they represent the views and hopes of the slaveowning class, not of the slaves themselves, and have no unequivocal standing as evidence, except about the ideology of the free.

Slaves have been treated, in a meme derived from the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, as “good to think with”; that is, when an upper-class Roman writes about slaves, he is using the figure of the slave to stand for something else (as Tacitus said that the senate under Augustus *ruere in servitium*, “rushed to enslave themselves,” *Ann.* 1.7).² William Fitzgerald’s *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination* (2000) represents this argument, and he includes Plautus; his book deals mostly with read, rather than performed, literature, and his approach thus resembles other treatments of the plays as a reader would experience them (cf. Sharrock 2009). An audience of upper-class slave-owners is specifically posited by Kathleen McCarthy (2000), who argues that the anti-owner sentiments expressed in the plays are aimed at easing the “burden of mastery” as well as upper-class men’s experience of oppression by more powerful men; slavery, for McCarthy, is borrowed in the plays just as the experience of African-American slaves was borrowed by the white men who created blackface. Since the plays were paid for by the state, they must have expressed ideas in conformity with the state’s. Her position is taken a step further by Michael Fontaine (2010), who believes that slaves in the 200s did not understand Latin and that the plays were written for an upper class newly interested in acquiring an education in Greek literature. These models of the audience, however, conflict with a long tradition of scholarly understanding of the audience as mixed. There is a general consensus that all the actors and performers were lower-class (Manuwald 2011, pp. 90–92). The plays indeed attack the ruling class (the *summi viri*) and address an audience for whom debt and debt bondage were major political issues, a mass of evidence ignored by historians painting a top-down picture of the mid-Republic.

Performance-based approaches are naturally less prone to homogenize the audience; opinions vary on the degree to which the troupe improvised (Petrides 2014; Marshall 2006, pp. 245–279). The Freiburg school, led by Eckard Lefèvre, emphasizes the relation of the *palliata* to traditional Italian oral performance types, especially Atellan farce (see Benz et al. 1995). Social-historical treatments are still rare (Leigh 2004; Richlin 2017b; Stewart 2012) and disagree on the plays’ relation to slavery (see Chapter 24).

So instead of closing with “Further Reading,” I end with an invitation to ponder future paths of scholarly inquiry. Social historians who study hunger have not looked to comedy, and historians of slavery who chronicle abuse have said little about the use of starvation and the rationing of food; the early *palliata* would well repay detailed study in this area,

as would Greek comedy. Religion appears onstage in many forms, and the plays could contribute to the understanding of popular religion in the 200s and early 100s, especially when combined with ongoing work on Republican votives and shrines. Slave friendships onstage need to be recognized as a radical reconstitution of kinship. Reading Plautus from below has a rich future.

NOTES

- 1 For variant numbers, see Walbank (1957, p. 440); on their fate, Leigh (2004, pp. 86–87). Many thanks to the editors for their patience and to David Lewis for showing me his book in progress. Translations throughout are my own.
- 2 This phrase, nowadays applied to anything and everything, apparently dates back to Edmund Leach's 1962 translation of Lévi-Strauss's *La pensée sauvage*, where *bonnes à penser* (of some animal species) was rendered as “good to think.”

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Slave Labor in Plautus

Roberta Stewart

In an influential study of the development of ancient slavery, Moses Finley (1998) correlated the rise of the slave societies in classical Athens and Republican Rome with the loss of a dependent labor force. The emergence of chattel slavery solved a labor problem created by the political development of the citizen. Hopkins (1978) developed a model to map out the interdependence of slave and citizen labor within the larger community. For these scholars and economic historians (Bodel 2011; Scheidel 2012), the slave as a labor unit simply exists (cf. Kopytoff 1986). But it was Hegel who recognized that slave labor was embedded in a relationship, and he theorized the competitive relationship of the master and slave over the slave's labor (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 13–31; Gadamer 1976, pp. 54–74; Rauch 1999; Schiavone 2000, pp. 165–169). For Hegel, the master gained recognition and the slave's labor; the slave worked for the master, an instrumentalized body that produced the material to satisfy the master's needs. According to Hegel, work and the product from work formed the basis for the slave's re-instantiation of self, a self-definition through the discipline of work. He embedded labor within the relationships of community and imagined an external and internal experience of domination: the slave experienced the forced expropriation of labor, and the slave consciousness developed as a consciousness circumscribed by forced labor. Hegel's understanding of slavery as a historical, social institution continues to inform historical studies of slavery and slave experience (e.g. Faes 1995; Willett 1998; Davis 1999; Schiavone 2000; Rollins 2007; Aching 2012), and Vincent Brown (2009) has again underscored the importance of viewing slavery as a contested relationship and a “predicament” of an enslaved person rather than a “condition” of a slave. The proposed analytical terms again emphasize the twin contests at the basis of slavery as a historical institution, a contest of expropriation (of labor) and a contest of definition of the subordinated self.

This chapter examines the relationships of labor in the emerging Roman slave society by focusing on the writings of Cato and the comedies of Plautus. We know that the institution of slavery was a daily fact of life in Rome for masters, for slaves, and for free citizens. But Plautus saw that a ubiquitous, seemingly normal and natural institution of his society was in fact a complicated relationship between a master and a slave, and he put those insights on the stage for a Roman public audience. The value of Plautus here cannot be overstated: slavery is a relationship and a product of discourse. Plautus staged masters and slaves talking and interacting and thus shows how slavery was constituted and enacted concretely as a relationship of physical and psychic coercion. The staged representations similarly developed and instantiated symbolic, ideological binaries of freedom and slavery, of citizen and slave, of honor and dishonor; an ideological function of the dramas studied closely first by Konstan (1983) with respect to elite roles. Plautus did not make a livestream documentary of slave labor and slave experience, nor did he write a philosophical treatise: he selected and framed for drama. What Cato tells us about slavery helps us understand and evaluate the evidence within Plautine dramas of the late third/early second century BCE. Although the Latin terminology for “work” (*opus, opera, labor*) did not distinguish spheres of slave and free labor (Finley 1998, pp. 136–137, 148–149; De Ste Croix 1988, pp. 19–32; Bodel 2011), both Cato and Plautus illustrate contexts and so reveal how the Romans conceptualized the labor of free and enslaved persons.

Cato’s treatise on farming, *De agri cultura* (c. 160 BCE), includes advice on slave management. In writing about the self-representation of the slave–master as master (cf. Reay 2005), Cato abstracts the relationships of master, slave, and slave labor. He illustrates the external relationships of forced labor and the labor problems suggesting the interior effects of subordination on a servile labor force. Cato claims for himself elite social identity because of his practice of agriculture, and he shows the complete instrumentalization of the enslaved person that allowed maximum exploitation of human labor. As such, Cato offers important insight into the definition of slave labor, both the labor needed to work the estate as well as the management of that work by the slave-owner and his overseer. Cato advises the slave-owner to question carefully the work on the farm:

When the master has learned the condition of the farm, what work has been done and what remains to be done, let him call in his overseer the next day and inquire of him, what part of the work has been completed, what has been left undone; whether what has been finished was done in a timely manner, and whether it is possible to complete the rest; and what was the yield of wine, grain, and all other products. (2.1)

Cato’s landowner becomes the master not only of tasks to be completed but also of time needed to complete them. Cato advises a careful accounting of work and time: “when he has reviewed these matters, he should make an accounting of the laborers and the time consumed.” He repeatedly refers to that calculus in discussions with the slave overseer (2.2): “when the overseer has given these and other excuses [sc. for the work not being completed], call the overseer back to your accounting of the work and workers employed.”

Even as he postures as a knowledgeable master with an authoritative voice, the conversations Cato imagines indicate that the relationships of slave labor were fraught. Master and his slave overseer contend over the amount of work done, as the overseer reports his own problems commanding the slave's work. The overseer reports on sick or runaway slaves, as well as bad weather. Cato thus conjures up a workforce attempting to control the conditions of their work and the terms of their enslavement. But he counters with the extreme commodification of the labor force. He urges the feeding of slaves according to their capacity to work (2.4), and the sale of worn-out tools and old or sick slaves, like old field animals (2.7). Against the derelictions of slave labor, he counters with the authoritative voice of the master who must insistently impose his vision of owed labor (2.2): "When the overseer has offered these and other reasons, bring the conversation back to the accounting of work and workers."

Cato insists on the possibility of work under all weather conditions:

If it has been a rainy season, remind him of the work that could have been done on rainy days: washing and pitching wine vats, cleaning the farm buildings, shifting grain, hauling out manure, making a manure pit, cleaning seed, mending old harness and making new; and that the slaves ought to have mended their smocks and hoods. (2.3)

He defines work as possible even during public holidays which were traditionally work holidays:

Remind him too that on public holidays old ditches might have been cleaned, road work done, brambles cut, the garden hoed, a meadow cleared, kindling bundled, thorns rooted out, spelt ground, and general cleaning done. (2.4)

Cato's master always has some work for the slave to do, and the master's vision of owed labor supersedes weather, natural time, and the Roman communal calendar. But beyond the idealized posture of the successful farmer, Cato constructs a system allowing maximum exploitation of enslaved persons as a labor force. Cato's chattel slavery provided an economic advantage because it allowed the master to drive labor harder and longer.

Cato thus presumes to appropriate the entirety of slave life and action within his mastery. His qualifications for the slave overseer, the successful slave who provided service labor and managed Cato's farm, describe a psychic assault and show that the expropriation of labor need not be physically violent in order to be just as complete: the successful slave overseer (*vilicus*) must subordinate his own sense of self completely to the interests of the master (5.1–5; Stewart 2012, pp. 50–53). Moreover, although Cato's treatise concerns the management of agricultural slaves, he seems to have imposed his labor regime on all his slaves. In his biography of Cato, Plutarch (21.2) records the cultural memory that Cato required his slaves either to be working or sleeping. Cato seems too to have maximized the childbearing potential of slave women: Cato's wife nursed the children of the family slaves, according to Plutarch (*Cat. Mai.* 20.3) in order to promote affective ties within the household, although the practice also facilitated a woman's more rapid return to fertility after childbirth. Cato's mastery presumed the total commodification of the enslaved person as a productive asset, both labor and human potential.

Commodification of Female Slaves

Slave sale, the enactment of a human being as a piece of purchasable property, illustrates the difficulty of the evidentiary base confronting the historian and reveals the peculiar value of Plautus, who staged the sale of the female slave twice, in *Persa* and *Mercator*. The edict of the curule aediles, dated early second century BCE, documents the Roman government's early concern to guarantee the integrity of purchases in the developing slave market at Rome:

See to it that the label for individual slaves be written in such a way that it may be rightly understood, what disease or fault there may be to each one, who is a runaway or wanders or is legally liable to noxal surrender. (Gell. *NA* 4.2.1)

While we have bills of sale on papyri and we have buildings that may have housed auctions, it is Plautus who suggests the thinking behind the market: what slave-owners were calculating as they purchased slaves.

In *Persa* Plautus showed a slave auction – and so the commodification of the enslaved person – in the most stark and disturbing terms to his Roman audience, especially the elite male heads of household in that audience (Stewart 2012, pp. 21–47). To stage his slave sale, Plautus developed the character of the freeborn young woman Virgo, a startlingly rare role of a freeborn female (Donat. *ad Ter. Ad.* 3.4.41; Packman 1999; Sherberg 2001). She is identified only by her stereotype (*Pers.* 336, 617) and not given a name, a depersonalized identity that she will emphasize and appropriate during the slave sale when she names herself “Lucris” or “profit.” The stereotyped Virgo is further commodified by her father, who betrays her, and his own role as father, in agreeing to sell her for the price of a meal (140–144, 336–338; Marshall 2006, p. 184). A modern lens could view the enslavement of Virgo as an episode on Roman patriarchs who watch a male head of household betray the code and disregard the expected protections on a freeborn female body.

In his staging, Plautus emphasizes slave sale as a commercial illusion, created by a seller to entice a buyer. Virgo is commodified for the market with a costume (157–158; Hardy 2005) and a letter creating a credible story of kidnap that turns her into exotic merchandise from the East. The letter – read aloud by the buyer to the Roman audience (Slater 2001, p. 39) – explains the slave trader's merchandise, a beautiful freeborn maiden stolen and transported for sale far away from her home in Arabia (520–522). The commodified, enslaved person emerges as a product of a discourse through the disconnected words of a letter.

Plautus stages the enslaved freeborn woman professing her necessary acquiescence in her commodification. Virgo answers questions about her birth – questions that follow the terms of the edict of the curule aediles governing slave sale and so identify the sale with Roman experience (619–620):

DORD. I do not want you to be surprised if we question you about your country
or your parents.

VIRG. Why should I be surprised, my good sir?

In a speaking role that is most probably a Plautine invention (Lowe 1989, pp. 392–393), she claims that enslavement has made her unable to have responses to her present experience: “My slavery has forbidden me to be surprised at my misfortune” (621). She says that enslavement has deracinated her and erased her past, and she likens her experience to death (635–638):

DORD. But I’m asking you, what your homeland is.

VIRG. What should it be, except this one where I am now?

DORD. But I’m asking about that one, which homeland it *was*.

VIRG. I consider everything that was, and when it was, as nothing, just like a man when he has breathed his last: why would you ask him who he was?

Virgo claims that slavery produces a conscious forgetting of the cultural frameworks and familial structures out of which she emerged, i.e. she describes her own commodification, a result of the forcible removal of the enslaved person from the natal language, community, and family – Finley’s concept (1998, pp. 143–145) of deracination – and her ongoing experience of social exclusion and dishonor – Patterson’s concept (1982, pp. 1–14) of social death. Moreover, although Kopytoff (1986, p. 65, cf. Patterson 1982, pp. 46–47) theorized slavery as a process that ultimately rehumanized and resocialized the slave who was “given a new social identity” as an extension of the master and so defined by him/her, Plautus’s plot imagines instead for a Roman audience a slavery with long-term, immutable dishonor: Virgo’s sale for sex work will permanently marginalize her, and she tells her father so (382–384; see esp. McCarthy 2000, pp. 161–162). True, Plautus makes the scene of sale “funny” and “comic” by staging Virgo during the sale as the clever slave who philosophizes (Fontaine 2010, pp. 92–97), replies truthfully and ambiguously, and whose presumptive buyer fails to hear subtlety in language. But overall Plautus stages a slave sale in which words turn a human being into a commodity, and the enslaved person cannot control or counter that prevailing discourse.

As an object for sale, Virgo is triply commodified as an exotically-costumed product, as the potential profits of sexual labor, and especially as a fantasy of the social cachet of owning a freeborn enslaved woman (cf. Baptist 2001, on the “fetishization” of newly enslaved, African female bodies). The stark realities of sex work are put on the stage and given crude expression by one of Rome’s lowest ranking social-status persons (McGinn 1998, esp. pp. 65–69), a pimp who advises her that she will get free by selling sex (“Please stop crying. You’ll be free right away, if you’ll lie down for sex often,” 656). Plautus stages Virgo’s sale as an event drawing on the sexual fantasies of the buyer (the pimp) and the entire Roman audience. During the sale the buyer is made to imagine the social connections the enslaved woman will make possible for him and his consequent social standing, because as a recently enslaved woman she will attract free, elite men as customers:

If you do buy her – immoral gods! – no pimp will be richer than you! You’ll turn men out of their estates and households at your own discretion. You’ll do business with men of the highest rank, they’ll be seeking your favor and coming to you for their carousing. (564–568)

Virgo’s repeatedly showcased value is her freeborn status, as the sale is planned (*forma lepida et liberali est*, “she has the charming figure of a freeborn girl,” 130), as the product

is introduced (*specie quidem edepol liberalist*, “she has the look of a freeborn woman,” 546), and during the sale itself (“I believe she comes from a noble family; you’ll make a fortune from her,” 651–52). Virgo’s freeborn appearance or *forma liberali* that will elicit male desire similarly describes a captive, trafficked woman at *Epidicus* 43 and a widow at *Miles* 967 (cf. *Mil.* 782, 871; *Ter. An.* 122; *Cic. Cael.* 6; *Val. Max.* 9.2 ext. 5; *Gell. NA* 6.8.3; *Amm. Marc.* 18.6.10). Freeborn status was evidently embodied and discernible (*Paul. Fest.* p. 121, *liberales dicuntur ... ingenuae formae homines*). Virgo’s reactions to being sold – her tears – increase her value and seal the deal. Plautus’s staging focuses on the simultaneous appreciation of and disregard for the enslaved person’s subjectivity during sale and illustrates how the commodification of slavery enabled a brutal exploitation of human capacity as a productive asset. Virgo is commodified as an object of fantasy that can be gawked at, as the pimp and the entire audience are invited to look at her (548, “Let’s admire her figure in silence”; cf. 521, 564). The eavesdropping scene – Toxilus and the pimp watch and overhear Virgo and the presumed slave-dealer Saturio – underscores the voyeurism (Slater 2001, p. 40). With the invitation directed at the Roman audience (*contemplemus formam*, “let’s admire her figure”) Plautus shows slave sale as a form of entertainment created around the commodified female body.

Plautus’s play showcases a sympathetic character (Marshall 2006, pp. 189–90) momentarily trapped within the objectifying system of slavery. His staging constructs the starkest and most brutal formulation of commodification: a freeborn female apprehended as an opportunity for sex. Moreover, Plautus shows how discourse creates the commodified human being, and Virgo’s attempts to claim or maintain her free status increase her value. Staging thus shows how commodification constitutes a psychic and physical assault on the enslaved person, disconnecting personhood from labor, and enabling in the labor system a level of brutality otherwise impossible.

In Plautus’s slave economy, commodified enslaved persons serve as currency in gift exchange that secure the position of males within the family and society. In *Mercator*, a son buys a slave woman for his own sexual pleasure and represents the purchase as a birthday gift of a slave attendant for his mother (89–90, 101–102; cf. James 2010; cf. *Captivi*, where a father purchases a four-year-old boy as a personal slave for his son of roughly comparable age: 981–982; cf. 990–992). In *Miles Gloriosus*, the braggart soldier sends his slave mistress away and gives to her as a goodbye gift an enslaved male attendant who had been given to him as a gift (95–98, 118–120, 1205). In *Stichus*, a son-in-law gives his father-in-law an enslaved female flute-player for companionship (571–573) and marks the expected sexual service. The giving of the gift is framed as a long negotiation among male family members about business, dowries, and friendship, or *amicitia*, among men (518–522) and males related by marriage (538–572). The language of the father-in-law’s proposal emphasizes the moral reasonableness of his request:

I’ve given you my daughter so that you could sleep with her properly; now I think that it’s fair that I should be given someone by you in return whom I can sleep with. (547–548; Barrios-Lech 2016, pp. 91–93)

So the gift of an enslaved woman is framed as a reciprocal exchange within the primary social relationships of a male with his world. Enslaved persons are shown as triply

commodified, as items of exchange, as items for labor, and as items that secure social relationships in the slave society. The purchase of slaves emerges as embedded in social expectations about males caring for their families, and the giving of slaves enacts male concern for family members and for each other, thereby underpinning the position of the patriarch *qua* patriarch.

Harsh and Unremitting Servile Labor

Plautus stages the harsh labor conditions of the commodified, enslaved person. Although he, like Cato, valorizes the virtuous agrarian life for free persons, he recognizes that rural manual labor mutilates the body. In *Casina* the slave overseer or *vilicus* imagines welcoming a town slave to the life of the farm, and punishing him with the work of carrying water in order to maintain a continuous water supply:

When you get to the country estate, you'll be provided with one jug and one path, one spring, one copper bucket, and eight vats. Unless they're always full, I'll fill you with lashes. I'll make you so hunched over from hauling water that you could be converted into a crupper.
(120–125)

Elsewhere, Plautus's masters threaten their slaves with penal labor in the mines or mills as a form of management, and Plautus's slaves seem indifferent to the threat (*Capt.* 721–738, *Pers.* 20–22). Hopkins (1993, cf. Parker 1989) and others have given us ways to think about torture of slaves and jokes about it. But it is the manual labor itself – the carrying of water – that Plautus represents here as punishing. The *vilicus* happily imagines the difficulty of farm work that will deform the slave's body. The manual slave labor of *Casina* correlates with Cato's farm economy not so much in the details of the labor as in the circumstances: the slave in a regular, normal, non-punitive day, always has work to do and works on the master's time. Everyday work becomes debilitating because it is relentless; everyday work becomes punishing not because the slave committed an offense but because the labor system is harsh.

Plautus's master, like Cato, imagines an unassailable authority to define never-ending servile labor. In *Menaechmi*, the slave Messenio, who will later in the play deliver a monologue detailing his calculated obedience to his master in his hopes to secure freedom, challenges his master's heretofore fruitless search for his lost brother (234–241). Calculating the labor (234), Messenio objects to the hours, literally years, spent unsuccessfully on the task. Master Menaechmus reminds him to comport himself as a slave who carries out orders and does not give them, and Messenio responds to the audience with candid acknowledgment of his slave status (249–252):

MEN. "Do what you're told, eat what you're given, stay out of trouble.
Don't be a bother: this will not be done *your* way." Biff [*em*]!
MES. Ouch [*em*]!
With that "em!" I know I'm a slave.
He couldn't have spoken more plainly in so few words.

The multivalent *em* (250) links master and slave, either culminating the master's comments as an embedded stage direction to mark an assault or beginning the slave's sputtering reply (*non potuit paucis plura plane proloqui*) as a shared line that underscores the assault. Messenio's unique rapport with the Roman audience (Moore 1998, pp. 42–43), whom he repeatedly addresses as confidants and witnesses, suggests a presumed understanding, if not approval, of the stated view of slave labor. In *Miles Gloriosus* Plautus develops the character of the old man Periplectomenus as a composite of stock roles, including beleaguered husband, upright patron, concerned father, and generous host (Moore 1998, p. 74; Maurice 2007, p. 416). In offering his invited guest Pleusicles his extended, generous hospitality, Periplectomenus, the “urbane *senex*” and “an indulgent, humane, and even libertarian figure” (so Konstan 1983, p. 50), assures Pleusicles that he has command of his house and has educated his slave household so that the slaves obey his orders: “I’ve schooled my slaves to serve me, my guest, not to give me the orders or for me to be submissive” (745). Good slave management produced obedient slaves who did their work, and stern mastery was consistent with the thinking of even the open-minded, generous, presumably sophisticated Roman male elite.

But Plautus's slaves talk to the audience – a lot – about the conditions of their labor. The master's unassailable right to define a task – what must be done and when and how – opens the dramatic action of *Amphitruo*. The slave Sosia enters and delivers an extended monologue, most probably a Plautine invention (Fraenkel 1960, p. 172), setting the scene as the middle of the night (153–154) and dilating upon the difficulties of serving a wealthy master who has no experience of work. The slave works unceasingly on a timetable set by a master unaware of the work involved:

My master's lack of restraint has compelled me.
 He roused me from the port, against my will, at this time of night.
 Surely he could've sent me here by daylight?
 The wealthy man's slave is worse off:
 Night and day, constantly there's more than enough
 That must be done or said, so that you can't rest.
 The wealthy master himself, with no experience of work or toil,
 Reckons that whatever he takes a fancy to is possible.
 He thinks it's fair; he doesn't think about the work involved. (163–172)

As the slave defines himself as the son of a home-born slave (*verna*; Mahoney 2004, ad loc.), the grumbling characterizes not the jarring experience of a freeborn person new to the demands of slavery but the frustrating reality of a human being who functions as instrumentalized human labor. The complaint about difficult, unending, dangerous terms of service is expressed and simultaneously mitigated with literary devices that identify the drama as comedy: the conventional opening of the play with two slaves battling each other (McCarthy 2000, p. 87 and n. 18), the eavesdropping asides of a god (Moore 1998, pp. 115–117; Slater 2001, pp. 187–188), the cinaedic meter (Moore 2012, p. 113). A critique of work and difficult labor conditions becomes the basis of comedy.

A distinctive series of Plautine monodies, studied by Fraenkel (1960, pp. 234–236), cumulatively summarize the desired skill set of the successful slave in the Roman economy

and reveal the working conditions of an enslaved person. Fraenkel's "running-slave" monologues reflect expectations of slaves constantly busy at the master's work (Fraenkel 1960, pp. 180–181; Csapo 1989). In *Mercator* the slave arrives in a hurry from the harbor to warn his master:

With all your might and strength, try, strive to save your young master saved through your effort: go on, Acanthio, drive your fatigue away from you, take care not to succumb to laziness. at the same time that my breathing is killing me (I can scarcely manage to inhale) ... (111–114)

The slave remarks on his weariness and physical distress. Similarly in *Stichus*, the slave hurries to deliver a message to the slave mistress of her husband's return (274–286). He emphasizes the weariness of his limbs (336) as he avows to work quickly in the interest of his mistress (338). In *Epidicus*, the expectation that a hurrying slave is a loyal, obedient slave becomes a strategy for manipulating a master. Urban service labor – finding a missing person to deliver a message – becomes unreal, a feigned experience of a slave with a strategy to pretend exhaustion in order to delude his master (194–200). The frantic pace of the obedient slave contrasts with freedmen who maintain calm control over their bodily movement, so the chorus in *Poenulus* (522–523): "It's more appropriate for free men to walk through a city with measured pace; whereas I believe it slavish to run in a hurry." An unhurried pace indicated status and marked off the free poor from slaves ("even though we seem plebeian and poor to you," 515). The running-slave monologues showcase the slave's hurried work and make comedy from the skill set of the successful slave: the ability to do what one is told, obediently and promptly. Slaves are made present – and become sources of humor – in the misfortunes of their labor conditions.

Plautus makes comedy with social conceptions of masters impatient and angry at the slave who works too slowly and not up to expectations. In *Mercator*, when the mistress Dorippa arrives from the country with her female attendant Syra, whom she faults for not moving more quickly, the slave-woman describes the effects of work on her old body:

SYR. I really can't, by god, the burden I bear is so great.

DOR. What burden?

SYR. Eighty-four years; and add to that slavery, sweat, and thirst.
At the same time, these things I'm carrying are weighing
me down. (672–675)

Syra's complaints are an inverse of the running slave entrance monologues, when slaves ascribe their exhaustion to their haste in serving the master's interests. Dramatic action thus underscores the typical performance of servile deference and the hardship imposed by slave labor. Hearing the slave at the limits of work, the slave mistress, undeterred, adds more work, commanding "Give me something for our neighbor's altar. Do give me this branch of laurel. Go inside" (676–677).

In *Asinaria*, one slave, posturing as a slave overseer, rages about the unreliability of another slave's labor: he censures him for disregarding his orders (407–413, 416) and for

requiring constant admonition; he threatens repeatedly to beat the slave for his failings (409, 418–419), and he rehearses his list of commands that the slave has failed to accomplish (418–431, quoted in Chapter 18, p. 274). The credible master, like Cato, is impatient and insistent that the slave work for him on his schedule (cf. *Capt.* 401–420, Stewart [2012], pp. 68–69).

In Fraenkel's second type of slave speech, the monody about duties or "catechism" (1960, pp. 234–236), slaves define the necessary virtues of slave labor, with the mechanism of a rapport-building monologue to the audience (cf. Segal (1968), p. 142; Moore (1998), p. 36), seemingly assenting to their predicament as enslaved labor. In *Aulularia*, the slave ordered to monitor activity in a neighbor's home claims that the successful slave puts the master's interests ahead of self-interest, even having the skill to read the needed labor from the master's face, and works quickly to fulfill the master's orders:

This is the action of a successful (*frugi*) slave, to do what I aim to do: not to consider the master's command as a bother and a nuisance; for a slave who seeks to serve his master according to his wishes must work quickly for the master, and slowly for himself [...] Let him learn a perfect understanding of his master's command, so that his eyes can discern what his expression wishes; let him hurry to execute his orders faster than fast chariots. (587–590, 599–600)

In *Menaechmi*, the slave Messenio (notably the only slave to deliver a catechism and not follow it with a scheme against the master) claims that the successful slave is always ready to serve the master's needs (981–982). The successful slave, like the commodified Virgo, has lost – or suppresses – psychic independence and autonomy of feelings, and so can act and think according to the perceived reading of an individual's expectations ("the successful slave knows how to be a chameleon-man," *Bacch.* 658; cf. *Persa* 9–10). The successful slave acts deliberately to serve the master's needs agreeably (*Aul.* 589, cf. *Pers.* 10). The successful slave adheres to the premises of Cato's servile economy: he makes the master's interests so completely his own that he works carefully in the master's interests even during the master's absence (*Men.* 966–969, cf. *Pseud.* 1113, *Pers.* 8–9); he shows no laziness, and works without reminder to get his work done in a timely fashion (*Rud.* 920–922). The monodies showcase slaves assenting to working conditions that are all-encompassing (in all circumstances) and require a complete disregard of self-interest in favor of the master's interest.

The monodies reveal the logic of the system of slave labor. The exemplary slaves contrast themselves with slaves who do not want to work, and they blame the slaves who resist the conditions of labor and the unfair relationships. Slaves blame slaves who refuse to help the master when summoned (*Mostell.* 876), who disregard the master's commands and require constant reminders to complete their work (*Pseud.* 1103–1104), and who hide themselves from the master, in order to be lazy and wander about and indulge gluttonously (*Pseud.* 1106–1107). Slaves associate the unwillingness of slaves to work for the master with personal character flaws, carnality, and lack of self-restraint. This thinking resembles the master's critique of slave labor. For example, at the beginning of *Stichus* the old master Antipho complains that the slaves are mindful of their food rations and deliberately unmindful of their work, and he threatens the whip in order to coerce their labor:

A slave who always waits to be reminded of his own duty and doesn't remember to do it of his own volition is a slave who is not at all good in his disposition. You all remember to ask for your rations of food on the first of every month; why do you remember less well the work that needs to be done in the house? Now unless every piece of household equipment is put in its proper place for me when I return, I'll remind you all with reminders made of cowhide. (58–63)

Similarly, the successful slave Messenio contrasts words and the whip as motivators of his own labor: he claims to have worked because he feared the whip:

This is the sign for a good slave, that one is good who
Looks out for, watches, arranges, and thinks about his master's business,
So that when the master is away he guards his master's business
As diligently as if he were present in person or even better.
A slave, who has a good sense of judgment, ought to count
His back above his gullet, His shins above his belly.
Let him remember what reward is given by their own masters
To slaves who are worthless, the lazy and shameless ones:
Beatings, shackles, millstones, exhaustion, hunger, harsh cold,
These are the rewards of laziness. I very much fear this misfortune; therefore I resolve to be good
Rather than bad. I can bear a reprimand much more easily: I hate a hiding. (*Men.* 966–977)

The justificatory logic for the whipping of slaves (see Saller 1994, pp. 133–153, esp. 143–148) contains a judgment of slaves as motivated differently than the free, by character if not by nature. Slaves do not work because of intemperance; they do work out of fear. Although the terminology of work does not differentiate slave and free labor, discussions about work do distinguish motivations: elites work out of feelings of owed reciprocity to friends and obligations to family (on *labor*, *Asin.* 872, *Men.* 1133, *Trin.* 1112, 1114; on *operae*, see *Bacch.* 542, *Mil.* 137, 766, *Rud.* 121, 891), and without calculation of cost (*Cist.* 670). The catechisms thus reveal the logic of the penal and labor system and come the closest I have found to an ideological justification of the exploitive labor regime.

Slave Labor and Freedom

Plautus stages the calculus of slave labor and freedom as imagined, and slave labor and freedom as experienced. Work is supposed to bring freedom in Plautus, as a stated principle of the master (*Poen.* 129–139) and especially as a stated principle of the obedient slaves who sing the monodies (*Men.* 966–989). In *Rudens*, Plautus stages the slave's self-conception of his work and his interactions with his master about his labor.

Gripus had read his Hegel. Late in the play he offers a monody about the virtues of his work in slavery:

When in the middle of the night I energetically got out of bed,
I put profit ahead of sleep and rest.
In the savage storm I strove to try to lighten my

Master's poverty and my own slavery.
I was unsparing in my labor. (914–919)

Gripus distinguishes himself from unnamed slaves who require the master's admonition, and he identifies his industry as a character trait that has now given him profit, or *lucrum*:

Absolutely worthless is the man who is lazy, and I really hate that type.
The man who wants to complete his duties in good time ought to stay awake.
He ought not to wait until his master wakes him for his duty.
For those, who gladly sleep, rest without profit and with misfortune.
Well, I, who was not lazy, have now found for myself, the means to be lazy, if I wish.
(920–925)

Gripus's monologue conjures up for the audience the experience of hearing the typically silent, subjective thoughts of a slave. He expresses a self-narrative of continual hard work, working on the master's time, and sacrificing sleep but ultimately ameliorating the hardships of slavery and leading to freedom.

But disciplined work does not produce reward. Having acquired resources (he assumes) with which he will purchase his freedom, Gripus complains – and is silenced – when the master describes Gripus's work as his own (1389–1391, cf. 1394):

DAEM. Since I was kind toward you and by my effort these things were preserved
for you –
GRIP. No way! Through mine! Don't say through yours.
DAEM. If you are wise, you'll hush up.

Gripus believed that work would re-instantiate him as a person. Plautus shows that the master appropriates Gripus's work, and Gripus protests but cannot stop it. So Hegel may help the modern analysis of ancient slave societies, but he does not help an ancient slave like Gripus. Plautus shows that the slave is re-instantiated as a slave in his labor. The appropriation of the slave's work by the master enacts his unilateral authority and the arbitrary decision-making identified with his status as master. In fact, while slaves in *Menaechmi* and *Epidicus* are rewarded for their chance finding of lost family members (Stewart 2012, pp. 151–155), no slave, good or bad, obedient or not, is ever freed in Plautus on account of his work.

Plautus shows the displacement of free dependents in preference for slave labor along with the disruption of patronal relationships and the vertical stratification of Roman society by chattel slavery. In *Stichus*, Plautus develops a contrast of labor of the free and the slave dependents of an elite house, the parasite Gelasimus and the slave Pinacium, through the conventional devices of dramatic doubling and mirroring (Damon 1997, pp. 32–33, 65–74). Early in the play, the matron Panegyris determines to send Gelasimus to the harbor to seek news about her long-absent husband (150–152), although she has also sent the slave Pinacium for the same purpose (153). Gelasimus is compliant labor: although he professes not to understand why after so many years his patron's wife has asked for his help and he presumes he is being tested (Petersmann 1973, ad loc.), he answers her summons

(266–269). Just as Gelasimus arrives at the house, he is literally upstaged by the household slave who returns from the harbor triumphantly, in a “running slave” monologue, with news of the master’s return (274–287). The staging, as Arnott observes (1972, p. 65), emphasizes the exclusion and disregard of the parasite. Pinacium literally draws the attention of the slave-mistress and the entire audience away from the parasite and to himself (330–332), and he insults the parasite (343), who complains of his previous, ineffectual objection to the mistreatment (344). Gelasimus nevertheless remains to work willingly, alongside and under the command of the slave Pinacium, as both clean the house, sweeping the porch and the entry (351–354). Finally, the parasite becomes dismissed labor, as Panegyris rejects his offer of continued help to prepare the sacrifice for the return of her husband:

- PAN. Go inside, Pinacium, tell the family slaves to prepare a sacrifice for me.
 Good-bye, Gelasimus.
 GEL. Don’t you want me to assist?
 PAN. I have enough slaves at home. (396–397)

The avowed preference for slave over free labor occurs only here in Plautus.

Gelasimus faces repeated social exclusion throughout the play by characters constructed by Plautus as honorable. Panegyris dismisses the free dependent of the family and so disregards the expected social obligations of patronage, but Plautus does not develop her role as a negative commentary on the capacities of women as social patrons – unlike, for example, the critique of the imperious *uxor dotata* who dismisses a parasite in the *Menaechmi*. Although *matronae* in Plautus rarely develop a direct sympathetic rapport with the audience through monologue (Moore 1998, p. 159), Kraus (2008) has argued that Plautus develops the competing obligations and duties of Panegyris and her sister as wives and daughters in order to craft a carefully considered discourse about differing constructions of authority and women’s virtue. With his traditional male patrons, Gelasimus again works very hard to offer his product – his wit – in order to secure a dinner invitation, but the returned husbands evaluate his dependence in terms of costs, deem him too expensive (628, cf. Cato, *Agr.* 5.4; Leigh 2004, pp. 18–19), and in two extended scenes (on staging Arnott 1972, pp. 64–72), deny him an invitation to dinner (464–496, 582–630) in favor of their social peers (*summi viri*, 490–494, cf. 594, 615) and family (612). *Stichus* ends with paired banquets of free family members with their social peers, and slave members of the household with their social peers – everyone except the parasite sharing in and celebrating the prosperity of the household. The dramatic action perhaps refracts the conflict between old-fashioned and new types of patrons (185–190, 470–487; Arnott 1972, p. 67), or political developments at Rome (Owens 2000), or a cultural narrative warning against the extreme self-abasement of a social dependent (Damon 1998, pp. 65–74) who ultimately professes himself willing to dine with the dogs (620).

In deliberately conflating free and slave workers as potential dependent labor and then staging the choice of slave labor over free dependent labor, *Stichus* reveals the effects of chattel slavery on traditional relationships of social dependency and the social and economic vulnerability of free labor in a slave society. Recognizing the absence of a distinct

sphere of free or slave labor in a slave society, De Ste Croix (1988, p. 23) proposed two advantages of free versus slave labor: the free controlled the terms of their labor and were embedded in their community. In contrast to the negotiated labor relations of debt slavery in the 12 Tables, *Stichus* illustrates the exclusion of cooperative, dependent, free labor from the slave household because of the availability of chattel slave labor. Slave and free perform the same work, but the slave, not the free man, is embedded in the household. The parasite's exclusion is also reflected in the play's development of the theme of *officium* and the language of work (Arnott 1972, pp. 59–62). All characters in *Stichus*, excepting the parasite, cite *officium*, or owed action, either their own or another's: the married daughters have *officium* to remain loyal to their husbands (7, 40, 42); husbands have *officium* to communicate with their wives (34–35); fathers have *officium* to protect married daughters (14); slaves have *officium* to carry out the master's orders (58). The parasite Gelasimus is ascribed the potential for labor (247–249; cf. 472, 616), but Plautus does not ascribe him an *officium*, or work arising from embedded relationships (*pace* Owens 2000, p. 397 on lines 266–268). For Gelasimus, who is dismissed from the household, the social or political asset of his freedom makes him vulnerable, and he determines to hang himself in his independence (634–637).

Focusing on representations of labor in Roman comedy looks at the heart of slavery as an institution, the continuous contest to expropriate labor from an enslaved person. Cato describes a Roman slave economy allowing maximum exploitation of commodified human beings. He claims for the master absolute control over both labor *and* time, and the slave worked both according to the master's will and on his timetable. He also offers a contrast and a measuring-stick for assessing Plautus's representations of the contests of masters and enslaved persons over their labor. The staged performances of his comedies (as well as those of other playwrights) both naturalized and normalized the relationships within that system, as Althusser (1994) argued. Commodification both capitalized on and ignored the personhood of the slave (cf. Kopytoff 1986; Baptist 2001; Johnson 2004), and Plautus shows that the disconnect between person and labor unit created by commodification allowed the conditions of labor to be harsh – so harsh that normal labor debilitated the body or dishonored the person. Characteristic features of Plautine comedy, such as the running slave entrances and the slave catechisms, reflect the realities of slave labor: running to work on the master's time and being afraid of the master's whip. Plautus makes slaves present in their misfortunes and turns their labor conditions into sources of humor. The qualities that form the negative moral judgment of slaves (“lazy” or “dishonest”) and justify Roman theories of the whip-worthiness of slaves are shown to emerge from the slave's resistance to the conditions of his/her labor.

Within the system of expropriated labor, Plautus shows the slave's definition of self with the discipline of work. He also stages the master's appropriation of the slave's labor and the slave's abject demoralization. In Plautus's system of slavery, the slave can never get free, neither through resisting the harsh labor conditions nor through obedient industry. Plautus's slave may have read his Hegel, but he also needs to have read Frederick Douglass (Willett 1998). Plautus knew that slave labor, by contrast with the status of the free citizen, gave Roman slave owners the strategic advantage of having labor embedded in the Roman household.

FURTHER READING

For the world history of slavery, Lenski (2018) has produced a rigorous challenge to Finley's model of the "slave society" (1998, original publication 1980) and is necessary reading. Wiedemann (2000) surveys the contributions of the Mainz Academy, intellectual premises, and particular projects. McKeown (2007) offers a useful introductory survey of historiography. Temin (2004, 2013) provocatively evaluates the Roman economy and slavery from a modern economic perspective. Excellent print bibliographies of works in many languages are in Bellen and Heinen (2003), indexed and arranged by topic; online, see T. Urbainczyk <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195389661/obo-9780195389661-0151.xml?rsk=LUYNWl&result=127&q=>.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Plautus and His Dramatic Successors in the Republican Period

Gesine Manuwald

Introduction

*postquam est mortem aptus Plautus, Comoedia luget,
scaena est deserta, dein Risus, Ludus Iocusque
et Numeri innumeri simul omnes conlacrimarunt.*

Since Plautus has met his death, Comedy mourns,
the stage is deserted, then Laughter, Play and Wit
as well as countless Rhythms all wept together. [trans. J.C. Rolfe]

This epitaph has been transmitted by the second-century scholar Aulus Gellius (NA 1.24.3) among a group of epitaphs for early Latin poets allegedly composed by the early Latin poets themselves; in Plautus's case, the epitaph rests on the authority of the late Republican scholar Varro, and Gellius remains doubtful about its authenticity. Whether or not Plautus wrote these lines, the piece demonstrates that after his death Plautus was seen (at least by some) as a comic genius who did not have an equal (but cf. Jocelyn 1995, p. 240); this is also suggested by revival performances of some of his plays later in the Republican period (see Chapter 25, pp. 387–388). Therefore, Plautus is likely not only to have found general appreciation but also to have had an influence on writers active after him, especially on playwrights in the same comic genre (Suerbaum 2002; Manuwald 2011). Even though preferences and expectations of audiences as well as the layout of performance spaces changed over time, later Roman dramatists continued to refer to Plautus as a model or to be inspired by motifs employed in his plays. Details of the relationship between Plautus and these later poets, however, are not easy to establish because the works of Plautus's successors, except for those of Terence, only survive in fragments, and after the end of the Republican period, full-scale comedies for stage performance were

no longer written. Moreover, active engagement with Plautus's plays in texts of other literary genres is observable only during limited periods (e.g. Jocelyn 1988, pp. 57–59). Still, an attempt will be made here to illustrate Plautus's standing in the Republican period and the close connections among Republican comic playwrights and, on this basis, to indicate the reception of Plautus by later comic playwrights and scholar-writers. Because of the limited amount of available material, it will be useful to focus on selected motifs and follow their exploitation by different writers.

Plautus's Standing in the Republican Period

The context for the dramatists' interaction with Plautus's plays is provided by the general appreciation of the playwright in the second and first centuries BCE. The surviving evidence suggests that Plautus was regarded as a successful Roman comic poet in his time and in subsequent centuries, a view that has generally been adopted in modern scholarship (e.g. Ronconi 1970; Blänsdorf 1974; Jocelyn 1995; contra Parker 1996, challenging the view that Plautus was more successful than Terence). Plautus's early reputation is shown not only by the existence and survival of the epitaph mentioned above, but also by the fact, equally reported by Gellius (*NA* 3.3.11), that at some point 130 plays circulated under Plautus's name. It is impossible to tell how many of these might have been genuine – a question that ancient scholars already found difficult to answer (Gell. *NA* 3.3) – but such a large number shows that Plautus's name carried weight, so that either it was considered advantageous to ascribe plays of uncertain authorship to Plautus or it was seen as likely that unattributed plays could belong to Plautus. While it has been noted that Plautus's plays did not become school texts and there was not a fixed canon for them, so that it was easier to attribute plays to him than to other poets (e.g. Parker 1996, p. 590), doing so still must have been seen as plausible.

Further comments transmitted for or by Varro confirm the admiration of Plautus's linguistic virtuosity, as expressed in an epitaph: “in those elements, in plots Caecilius demands the prize, in character drawing Terence, in language Plautus” (*Sat. Men.* 399 B.: *in quibus partibus, in argumentis Caecilius poscit palmam, in ethesis Terentius, in sermonibus Plautus*). Quintilian colorfully expands the report: “True, Varro (quoting the view of Aelius Stilo) held that the Muses would have talked like Plautus if they had chosen to speak Latin” (*Inst.* 10.1.99: *licet Varro Musas, Aeli Stilonis sententia, Plautino dicat sermone locuturas fuisse si Latine loqui vellent*,” trans. D.A. Russell). At around the same time Cicero attests a particular kind of wit in Plautus:

There are in general two brands of humour, the one illiberal, insolent, outrageous, indecent (*inliberale, petulans, flagitiosum, obscenum*), the other refined, sophisticated, clever, witty (*elegans, urbanum, ingeniosum, facetum*). Not only our own Plautus and Attic Old Comedy, but also the books of the Socratic philosophers, are packed with the latter sort. (Cic. *Off.* 1.104; trans. M.T. Griffin / E.M. Atkins, modified)

Moreover, in the period in which revival performances of older plays and performances of new plays existed side by side in Republican Rome during the second and first centuries

BCE, there was demand for “old” plays, including those by Plautus, and these were preferred to “worthless” new plays. At least, this is what organizers of a revival performance claimed in a new prologue for Plautus’s *Casina* presented on that occasion:

*qui utuntur vino vetere sapientis puto
et qui lubenter veteres spectant fabulas;
antiqua opera et verba quom uobis placent,
aequom est placere ante <alias> veteres fabulas:
nam nunc novae quae prodeunt comoediae
multo sunt nequiores quam nummi novi.
nos postquam populi rumore intelleximus
studiose expetere vos Plautinas fabulas,
antiquam eius edimus comoediam,
quam vos probastis qui estis in senioribus;
nam iuniorum qui sunt non norunt, scio;
verum ut cognoscant dabimus operam sedulo.
haec quom primum acta est, vicit omnis fabulas.
ea tempestate flos poetarum fuit,
qui nunc abierunt hinc in communem locum.
sed tamen apsesentes prosunt <pro> praesentibus.*

I think people who enjoy vintage wine and vintage plays have good taste / are wise. Since old-fashioned works and words please you, it’s right that old plays please you more than others: for the new comedies they produce nowadays are far more worthless than the new coins. Since we learned by popular rumour that you eagerly desire plays by Plautus, we’re staging an old comedy of his that those older folks among you approved. Well, those among the younger crowd don’t know it, I’m sure; but we’ll make every effort that they get to know it. When this play was first performed, it surpassed all other plays. In that age there was a flower of poets, who’ve now gone away from here to the place where all men go. Yet, though absent, they profit us as if present. (5–20)

Even if the organizers exaggerated the popularity of Plautus’s plays for their own sake, they would not have brought such a play on stage, claimed that they were reacting to popular demand, and hinted at their monetary gain if audiences had not been interested at all.

In the canon of the 10 best comic playwrights by Volcacius Sedigitus, drawn up around 100 BCE (Gell. *NA* 15.24), Plautus comes second (after Caecilius Statius) and is characterized as easily surpassing the others, suggesting that there is a marked gap between the first two and the other comic poets:

*multos incertos certare hanc rem vidimus,
palmam poetae comico cui deferant.
eum meo iudicio errorem dissolvam tibi,
ut, contra si quis sentiat, nihil sentiat.
Caecilio palmam Statio do mimico.
Plautus secundus facile exuperat ceteros.*

This question many doubtfully dispute,
 Which comic poet they'd award the palm.
 This doubt my judgment shall for you resolve;
 If any differ from me, senseless he.
 First place I give Caecilius Statius.
 Plautus holds second rank without a peer. (trans. J.C. Rolfe)

Cicero mentions a performance of Plautus's *Pseudolus* in his time, in which the famous actor Q. Roscius Gallus plays Ballio, "that most rascally and perjured pimp" (Cic. *Q. Rosc.* 20 [trans. J.H. Freese]). These pieces of evidence confirm that Plautus continued to be popular and that there were revival performances of his successful plays into the first century BCE.

Those revivals, however, as the prologue to Plautus's *Casina* demonstrates, were not necessarily faithful re-performances of the "original" plays (to the extent that this was possible); the text and the staging could have been adapted to the requirements of a new performance context. This was not frowned upon and was made all the easier since no "standard" versions of the texts existed. The effects of subsequent generations of actors, directors, and producers modifying the scripts are still noticeable in the surviving material and provide evidence of a particular kind of interaction with Plautus's plays (Tarrant 1983, pp. 302–303; Deufert 2002, pp. 25–43). Adaptations are not an indication of dissatisfaction or a lack of appreciation of the original plays, but rather show that these pieces were seen as worthy of creative engagement.

More precise indications of Plautus's standing within the comic tradition, as seen by comic playwrights, come from the later *palliata* poet Terence. In a controversy with contemporary dramatists, Terence found it acceptable to distance himself from the methods of others and to refer to Plautus as a paradigm and model in order to justify his own method of composition (including the technique of *contaminatio*), which apparently included a freer style of transposition (Ter. *An.* 18–21; cf. Jocelyn 1995, p. 239; Parker 1996, p. 613; Wright 1974, p. 127). Moreover, Terence used Menander's *Kolax* as a model just as Naevius and Plautus had done, though he claims that he was not aware of these earlier plays at the time and therefore cannot be accused of plagiarism (*Eun.* 25–34). While Terence's return (even if inadvertent) to the same Greek model that Plautus had used shows that later playwrights had similar views on what might be turned into an effective play for the Roman stage, the fact that Terence can plausibly claim not to have known Plautus's version indicates that not all of Plautus's plays were easily available in later decades. On the other hand, the fact that Plautus's slightly younger contemporary Ennius (239–169 BCE) seems to have been more active and more successful in the area of tragedy than in that of comedy might be attributed to Plautus's overwhelming presence.

Accordingly, Plautus is likely to have been such a towering figure and a writer of such popular plays that later dramatists, especially in the comic genre, could not ignore him. Thus, he must have had an influence on his "successors," in that they had to make deliberate decisions on whether to follow Plautus's characteristics or to diverge from them. Generally, Roman comic poets are known to have interacted with the work of their predecessors, although it is uncertain in what way they were able to gain access to plays of predecessors. Written scripts seem not to have been widely available until the late second or early first century BCE; at least Terence could plausibly claim that he did not know of an

earlier play by Plautus (Deufert 2002, pp. 23, 27; Goldberg 2005, pp. 48–50; Manuwald 2011, p. 120). In the absence of editions of the text until the late Republic, later playwrights could only have been aware of earlier plays through memory and oral tradition, by making an effort to gain access to archives of impresarios, or later, by revivals of popular pieces.

Successors in Plautus's Comic Genre

Except for those of Terence, the plays of all of Plautus's successors in the dramatic genre of *fabula palliata* only survive in fragments. Therefore, it is difficult to establish the precise extent of Plautus's influence, especially on a more macro level as regards the composition of plots and scenes. Similarities in wording, characters, or individual motifs are somewhat more straightforward (Ferri 2014). For instance, an author of the late-antique *Historia Augusta* records that early Roman comic writers liked to have some of their characters use established phrases; he claims that a line in Terence's *Eunuchus* (426) goes back to a phrase of the first Roman playwright Livius Andronicus (Liv. Andr. *Pall.* 8 R.³ = 6 W.) and that expressions from Plautus and Caecilius Statius have been taken up by other comic writers (SHA 30, *M. Ant.* 13.5). Indeed, Deufert has compiled a list of similar phrases in Plautus and Terence¹: while the wording in those instances is undoubtedly comparable, the overall number of correspondences is limited and some of the expressions are fairly unspecific. Therefore, such connections remain piecemeal, and it is often not easy to determine whether they are the result of a shared comic tradition or are deliberate references to Plautus; only the (nonexistent) wider context could tell us whether an allusion to a particular passage in Plautus enhances the meaning in the new context and is thus likely to be deliberate. Consequently, it may be more promising to study the use of particular motifs that can be identified in Plautus and his successors (such as the contrast between town and country), though even in those instances the preserved examples may not provide a complete picture.

Caecilius Statius

Plautus's immediate successor in the dramatic genre of *fabula palliata* was Caecilius Statius (c. 230/20–168/7 BCE). He is now generally seen as occupying an intermediate position between Plautus and Terence: while Caecilius appears to be close to Plautus in aspects such as metrical variety, use of colorful language, and employment of linguistic effects and puns, in other respects – such as choice of themes, approach to Greek models, and engagement with the literary tradition – he looks forward to Terence (Guardi 1974, pp. 21–23; Manuwald 2011, pp. 234–242; contra Wright 1974, pp. 125–126).

In Caecilius's play *Hypobolimaens* (commented on by Cicero and Varro), the basic situation – namely, that a father has two sons, one of whom is brought up in the city and the other in the countryside (Cic. *S. Rosc.* 46) – recalls the circumstances in Terence's *Adelphoe*. Beyond that, the difference between living in the town and in the countryside can be inferred as one relevant feature of the play. While this is a theme throughout New Comedy (e.g. Menander's 'Υποβολιμαῖος ἢ Ἀγροίκος, F 372–387 PCG), it is prevalent in some of

Plautus's plays, including *Mostellaria* (cf. I 1), *Menaechmi* (cf. II 1), and *Truculentus* (cf. III 1–2) (Leigh 2004, pp. 98–157). The first scene in *Mostellaria*, for instance, presents a dialogue between two slaves; one represents the country, where there is toil, but also a virtuous, responsible life; the other the city, where people “Greek it up,” having dinners and love affairs and wasting money. In the view of the country slave, being in town has corrupted the master's son, who was previously an excellent fellow (82–83). This agrees with Cicero's assessment, adopting Roman values for the sake of the argument in a public speech, that the father in Caecilius's *Hypobolimaecus* preferred the son reared in the country (Cic. *S. Rosc.* 46).

Turpilius

As for Caecilius Statius, so for Turpilius (d. 104/3 BCE), the last poet of the *fabula palliata* in the Republican period. It is almost certain that he also followed the comic tradition of which Plautus is the main representative, although Turpilius's plays too only survive in fragments. The adherence to comic motifs as they can be found in Plautus is suggested by a metadramatic comment in *Demetrius*, where a character says that he has tricked the father out of money “after the old example of lovers,” presumably referring to precedents in earlier comedies (*Pall.* 35–36 R.^{2–3}). This procedure is confirmed in practice when Turpilius uses techniques in adapting Greek plays observable in Plautus (and also Terence); for instance, by changing an opening monologue in the Greek play (which survives, in this instance) into a dialogue (*Epiclerus*: Turp. *Pall.* 50–53 R.^{2–3} vs. Men. F 129 PCG; see Chapter 15, pp. 222–227).

Fragments from Turpilius's *Hetaera* mention moving to the countryside. Interestingly, for the speaker here the countryside is not a pure region untainted by luxury and love affairs, but a place to spend time with women (*Pall.* 77–78 R.^{2–3}). In another fragment, a person decides to go to the countryside, rather than being an overseer near the town (*Pall.* 82–83 R.^{2–3}). There might be a connection with a master who fell in love with a maiden he saw near a temple, as related by a slave in other fragments (*Pall.* 72–74; 75–76 R.^{2–3}). At any rate, this presentation of the countryside as a place of greater freedom could be a deliberate reversal of the situation found in Plautus and continued by Terence. Apparently, if one may draw conclusions from such snippets, Turpilius introduced the countryside as a region representing characteristic ways of life and modes of behavior (with the city as a contrast). By creating such a connection, Turpilius followed conventions established by Plautus, while by modifying the associations, he seems to have given the stereotypical opposition another meaning. Clearly, a creative development of the principles shown by Plautus was possible in a later period.

Terence

The most obvious candidate for assessing Plautus's influence is Terence (c. 195/4–159 BCE), who was active a few decades after Plautus, because of the availability of complete plays.² Ancient commentators sometimes praise Terence for being different from Plautus, for instance by avoiding interference with other literary genres (Euanth. *Com.* 3.5–8); and in comparisons between playwrights they single out different features for

Plautus and Terence, respectively. Terence himself, however, regarded Plautus as a model, at least in aspects of dramatic technique. Scholars have often argued that Terence is most successful where he is at his most Plautine, for example by introducing burlesque scenes (but see Parker 1996). While this is somewhat simplistic, and there are obvious divergences in form between Plautus and Terence (e.g. purer language, less metrical variety, no expository prologues in Terence's plays), Terence takes up motifs and scene structures found in Plautus. The opposition between town and country is an element in both playwrights' work. Terence adopts this motif while he endows it with a new dimension: it underlies the contrasting characterization of the two brothers, each bringing up a boy in their own ways, in Terence's *Adelphoe* (40–47). Here, the tension between the two modes of life associated with the two areas does not lead to a straightforward, one-off funny contrast, but determines the entire plot and the broader questions of methods of education and the relationship between generations; it is not immediately obvious which side ultimately emerges as preferable.

Successors in Other Comic Genres

Fabula Togata

From about the early second century BCE, Rome had not only Greek-style comedy, but also the new genre of *fabula togata*, comedy with a Roman/Italian setting. Despite differences between the two forms of light drama, most notably the fact that the Roman version apparently was more serious and less fanciful and free (e.g. slaves in *fabula togata* were generally not allowed to be cleverer than their masters according to Donatus, *ad Ter. Eun.* 57), there is overlap in language and themes, since both varieties center around comic plots based on love affairs. *Fabula togata* probably emerged as a result of differentiation rather than of reaction: as *fabula palliata*, which had originally combined Greek and Roman elements, started to become more Hellenic (while it had shown precedents for plot-based comic dramas in Latin), it was possible and desirable to create a Roman comic form. It is, therefore, not a surprise that *fabula togata* developed in relation to the existing comic form of *fabula palliata*.

This cross-generic inspiration is confirmed by fragments from *Compitalia*, a play by Afranius (fl. c. 160–120 BCE), the most famous *togata* poet. These extracts, probably deriving from the drama's prologue, say that the poet would take anything that suited him and that he could not do better from previous poets, including Latin ones. Since admiration for Terence as a great poet is expressed in another fragment from the same play, the Latin poets Afranius is ready to exploit are likely to include *palliata* playwrights, with Plautus among them (Afran. *Tog.* 25–28; 29 R.²⁻³ = 27–30; 31 Dav.).

In *fabula togata*, too, the contrast between city and countryside is frequent. In *Gemina* by Titinius (fl. c. 200 BCE), the first attested writer of this dramatic genre, the role of the countryside is comparable to its function in Turpilius: in *Gemina* the countryside appears as a place where the husband can enjoy more freedom and spend time with a courtesan; hence, his wife wants to prevent him from going there (Tit. *Tog.* 41¹–42; 43–44 R.²⁻³ = 41–42; 48–49 Dav.). In fact, as another line by Titinius, from a comedy of unknown title, shows,

the countryside can be a place where people “live like Greeks” (Tit. *Tog.* 175 R.²⁻³ = 170 Dav.: *hominem improbum! nunc ruri pergraecatur*, “A shameless fellow! Now he behaves like a Greek in the countryside.”). The use of the term *pergraecari*, frequent in Plautus (e.g. *Bacch.* 813; *Mostell.* 22; 64; 960; *Poen.* 603), is particularly noteworthy in a *fabula togata* set in Rome, since it clearly describes foreign and inappropriate behavior. This also shows that a notion prominent in Plautus has been taken up and modified for a different setting.

A character’s announcement to acquaint the addressee with a “comedy,” which might refer metaphorically to an intrigue (*comoedia*: Tit. *Tog.* 81/2 R.²⁻³ = 74–75 Dav.; see Daviault 1981, p. 112; Guardì 1985, p. 54), or the mention of an “architect” (*architecton*: Tit. *Tog.* 129 R.²⁻³ = 127 Dav.) could indicate scheming slaves, since these words are used in such metaphorical (and metatheatrical) senses in Plautus (Plaut. *Trin.* 706; *Poen.* 1110). References to pimps or parasites in *fabulae togatae* also recall *palliatae*.

In Afranius’s *Divortium* (*Divorce*), someone apparently tries to withdraw secretly to the countryside to avoid repaying the dowry (*Tog.* 47–49 R.²⁻³ = 59–61 Dav.: *qui conere noctu clanculum / rus ire, dotem ne repromittas vafer, / honeste ut latites et nos ludas diutius*. “You who are trying to go to the countryside at night secretly, so that you do not formally promise repaying the dowry, you crafty person, so as to hide yourself in a respectable way and to deceive us longer”). The countryside thus appears as a place where it is easier to hide and where one does not do business; a characteristic also implied in Plautus’s use of the motif, but used here with a different moral assessment. In Afranius’s *Fratriae*, a person in the countryside is described as poor (and perhaps not clever) and likely to be content with a small dowry (*Tog.* 159–160 R.²⁻³ = 163–164 Dav.). The discussion of dowry is an issue typical of *fabula togata*, as it focuses on proper marriages, whereas in *fabula palliata* what is needed is money to free the girls the young men are in love with from the possession of a pimp. Still, the notion of miserly fathers (e.g. Plaut. *Aul.*) and unsophisticated characters who can be tricked is the same in both versions of the presentation of love relationships.

Fabula Atellana

The *fabula Atellana*, which became literary with the works of Pomponius (fl. 89 BCE) in the early first century BCE, also has examples of the contrast between city and countryside (esp. Pomp. *Atell.* 7 R.²⁻³: *at ego rusticatim tangam, <nam> urbanatim nescio*, “But I will approach [it] in a country way, for I do not know [how to do it] in a city way”). Unlike *fabula palliata* and *fabula togata*, this light dramatic genre developed from a local, preliterary form; this may be one reason why the activities of farmers form a significant element in this genre, which can already be seen from the surviving titles of literary Atellanae (e.g. Pomp. *Aruspex vel Pexor rusticus* [“The Soothsayer or Redneck Pexor”], *Pappus Agricola* [“Pappus the Farmer”], *Rusticus* [“The Clodhopper”], *Vacca vel Marsuppium* [“The Cow or The Purse”], *Verres aegrotus* [“The Sick Boar”], *Verres salvos* [“The Well Boar”]). Still, because the literary form developed late, it is plausible that Plautus influenced the way in which the motif is deployed: in a fragment of Pomponius the countryside seems to be a place where an overseer can feel like the master, since the real master rarely visits and apparently stays in the city (Pomp. *Atell.* 45–46 R.²⁻³).

Although, owing to the lack of evidence, we cannot establish whether the dramatic characterization of living in the countryside as positive and living in the city as negative in moral terms derives only from Plautus, it is possible that his comedies at least confirmed this opposition in Roman consciousness. Engaging with this notion, comic playwrights after Plautus (of all types of light drama) no longer present living in the countryside unequivocally as a guarantee for a morally virtuous life; the countryside, rather, becomes a place where one can avoid social control.

Successors as Scholar-Writers

Plautus's impact on later writers goes beyond "dramatic successors" in the strict sense, but also includes scholar-writers who actively engaged with Plautus's works and reacted to them in their own writings. Toward the end of the second and into the first century BCE, when early comedies became available as scripts and philological work on them started, Plautus was one of the first playwrights to receive attention because of the large number of comedies circulating under his name and the challenge of identifying the genuine ones. The most extensive discussion of this process is found in Gellius; he mentions several early Roman scholars who voiced an opinion on this issue (Gell. *NA* 3.3). Plautus's characteristic style served as a criterion for decisions on the genuineness of the numerous plays ascribed to him (cf. Gell. *NA* 3.3.3; Cic. *Fam.* 9.16.4; Macrobian *Sat.* 2.1.10–11).

The tragic poet L. Accius (170–c. 80 BCE) voiced an opinion about the genuineness of plays ascribed to Plautus (doubting the authenticity of some), presumably in his treatises (Gell. *NA* 3.3.9; Acc. *Did.* 19–22 W = *Gram.* XV D). Beyond that, despite the difference in dramatic genre, he shares one title with Plautus: he composed an *Amphitruo* as Plautus had done, and Plautus classified his drama as a "tragicomedy" on formal grounds (50–63). The fragmentary state of Accius's *Amphitruo* makes it difficult to establish details of his version, but the tone and plot appear entirely appropriate to tragedy, in contrast to Plautus's play. Apart from occasional words, highlighted by later grammarians and lexicographers for their particular usage or meaning with examples from comedy and tragedy, not much overlap is observable elsewhere, either. In principle, however, since Plautus commented on contemporary tragedy and included tragic elements in his plays, it would not be strange if there were reflections of Plautine comedy in contemporary and later tragedy.

M. Terentius Varro (116–27 BCE), the polymath and friend of Cicero, apparently had a great deal of interest in Plautus. In addition to his treatises on drama, he wrote *Menippean Satires*, in which he is known to have quoted Ennius and other Republican dramatists. In this genre, too, he had literary discussions of Plautus and other Republican comic playwrights, both on their respective dramatic qualities (Varro, *Sat. Men.* 399 B.) and on their use of language (Varro, *Sat. Men.* 40; 522 B.).

A little earlier and without any academic study of Plautus's output, the satirist Lucilius (c. 180–103 BCE) acted as a specific kind of "scholar poet," since he (like Horace later) used his satires to address questions of literary theory. He critically confronted comedy, like other literary genres such as tragedy and epic, since he apparently found fault with comedy's overblown and unreal character. His most extensive attack appears to have been

targeted at Caecilius Statius's comedy *Hymnis*, as he recreated stock comic features in one of his satires, imitating and exaggerating typical elements of comedy.³ He also quotes a line from Plautus's *Mercator* (Lucil. 736 M = 747 W; Plaut. *Merc.* 397). Obviously, the context is unclear, but the fragment might come from a satire about love affairs, which apparently includes a reference to Terence's *Eunuchus* (Lucil. 729 M = 737 W; Ter. *Eun.* 46–50, 64–66). As in Plautus, the quoted line could be a description of a woman who is meant to do the housework and who is not, or is not meant to be, attractive. Whether Lucilius reuses this line or ridicules it must remain unclear in the absence of context. In any case, such connections and comments indicate, as in the case of the other scholar-writers, that Plautus's impact transcended the area of light drama and provoked creative interaction and development.

Conclusion

Plautus himself may have already taken up a number of motifs and stylistic elements from earlier poets, especially from his immediate predecessor Naevius. But Plautus certainly then came to be seen as the most impressive representative of Roman Republican Greek-style comedy, from his own time onward into modern scholarship. Even though the lack of evidence makes it difficult to determine Plautus's precise influence on particular later plays during the creative period of Roman light drama, it is clear that the *palliata* tradition he helped shape continued after his death, that producers returned to his plays for successful performances, and that later poets and scholars engaged with particular elements of his plays. Thus, the engagement with Plautus's oeuvre covers not only revivals of his plays, but also his successors in this dramatic genre who took up conventions created or expanded by him and developed them further; moreover, his impact extended to other dramatic forms and literary genres engaging with comedy. Because Republican comedy may include metadramatic comments on the genre, especially in prologues, there is some implicit assessment of Plautus's role even before the time of first-century scholars and beyond. These scholars evaluated early Republican playwrights according to the interests and standards of their time and the more refined view of literature that had developed in the meantime. Accordingly, therefore, Horace criticizes that Plautus's aim is to make money and that he does not spend enough time and effort on polishing the presentation and creating a tight plot (Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.168–176).

The features found in Plautus and his dramatic successors in Rome obviously developed from a common source, combining the shared New Comedy tradition of Greece and Rome with some indigenous elements. Thus, it is not always possible to distinguish between the specific influence of Plautus on later writers and the influence of the general comic tradition of which he was a part. Nevertheless, this overview has indicated some ways in which the appearance of such elements in Plautus constituted a reference point for later playwrights and scholars. Even though Plautus's plays did not become school texts like those of Terence and did not receive many early commentaries, they stimulated productive reception from early on and prompted scholars to engage with them, leading to positive – as well as, in some periods, negative – assessments.

NOTES

- 1 See Deufert (2002, pp. 27–28), who notes that, if interpolations in Plautus’s texts are assumed, the chronology will not always be obvious. He mentions the following correspondences: Ter. *An.* 980–981 – Plaut. *Cist.* 782–783; Ter. *Haut.* 86 – Plaut. *Pseud.* 19; Ter. *Haut.* 110 – Plaut. *Merc.* 62; Ter. *Haut.* 236 – Plaut. *Bacch.* 679; Ter. *Haut.* 642 – Plaut. *Men.* 580; Ter. *Eun.* 801 – Plaut. *Capt.* 800; Ter. *Eun.* 629–631 – Plaut. *Aul.* 377–380; Ter. *Phorm.* 541 – Plaut. *Pers.* 729; Ter. *Phorm.* 976 – Plaut. *Most.* 655; Ter. *Ad.* 22–23 – Plaut. *Trin.* 16–17; Ter. *Ad.* 36–38 – Plaut. *Mil.* 720–721; Ter. *Ad.* 41 – Plaut. *Bacch.* 1207; Ter. *Ad.* 785–786 – Plaut. *Mil.* 582–583.
- 2 Wright (1974, esp. p. 127) argues that Terence broke with an otherwise uniform *pal-liata* tradition. “Any reader who is at all familiar with Roman comedy will agree at once that Terence is not part of the unified Roman comic tradition which I have been describing in the foregoing chapters. In style, structure, characterization, and moral outlook Plautus (along with, I would argue, all the other Roman playwrights discussed thus far) and Terence are about as different as two poets working in the same genre can be.” pp. 150–151). Even if this were the case, it would indicate productive engagement with the plays of predecessors.
- 3 Cf. e.g. Lucil. 810; 815; 817; 878; 879–880; 881; 882–883; 888–889; 890; 891–893; 894 M = 964; 965; 897; 900; 901–902; 903; 904–905; 887–888; 892; 893–895; 889 W.

FURTHER READING

Many studies on Roman comedy and on Plautus include information on the reception of the genre and its representatives (e.g. Perysinakis and Karakasis 2014); there is, however, no comprehensive work on the reception of early Roman comedy, Plautus, or Terence in antiquity. J. Blänsdorf (2002, in German) provides an overview of relevant passages illustrating the reception of Plautus, with brief discussion. Plautus’s impact on post-antique writers has been studied more extensively (see the data in von Reinhardstoettner 1886, observations in Segal 2001, and the following chapters in this volume).

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Alii Rhetorica Tongent: Plautus and Public Speech

Emilia A. Barbiero

Introduction

Although ancient literature frequently draws upon the style and tropes of oratory and so may be broadly defined as “rhetorical,” drama shows specific affinities to oratory. Both genres were performed before large audiences, requiring mastery of elocution as well as of gesture (e.g. Cic. *De or.* 1.128), and both employ persuasion. Just as an orator seeks to convince the spectators of a particular perspective or strategy, the theatrical player tries to prevail upon his audience to suspend belief and enter the world of pretend; that is, to see reality his way. Finally, like drama, oratory entails *mimesis*. A *rhetor* affects various states of emotion during a speech and may even act out a role via *sermocinatio*, a technique that involves speaking in the first person as someone else (e.g. *Rhet. Her.* 4.52). In such instances the orator becomes almost indistinguishable from his theatrical counterpart. Both assume a *persona* to evoke someone who is not “there.” It is no coincidence, then, that professionals of oratory and drama alike were called (inter alia) *actores* in classical Latin (Fantham 2002; Batstone 2009, p. 212).¹

These performers were, however, fundamentally different in social status. Whereas the Roman orator was idealized as a *vir bonus dicendi peritus* (“a good man skilled at speaking,” Quint. *Inst.* 12.1.1, quoting Cato’s definition) – a man who used *eloquentia* to set forth the truths born of his ancestral and personal *auctoritas* (Dugan 2009, pp. 178–181) – stage actors were considered effeminate practitioners of a degrading profession from which citizens were legally banned (Edwards 1993, pp. 98–136). Overlap between the two genres was thus a source of tension, for it highlighted the mimetic and manipulative aspects of public speech (Culpepper Stroup 2007, pp. 27–28). Cicero takes up this problem in the *De oratore*, a dialogue set within a theatrical frame – the *Ludi Romani* of 91 BCE. In Book 2, Antonius offers an *apologia* for oratorical *mimesis* by claiming that the

sentiments a speaker conveys are “real,” in that they originate in him and so he actually feels them, as opposed to the fake versions portrayed by the theatrical player (2.189). But Crassus subsequently proclaims in a discussion of *actio* that the latter depicts phony emotions more effectively than the former does emotions of the authentic sort:

haec ideo dico pluribus, quod genus hoc totum oratores, qui sunt veritatis ipsius actores, reliquerunt; imitatores autem veritatis, histriones, occupaverunt.

I speak at length about these matters because orators, who are actors of the truth itself, have abandoned this whole field, whereas those imitators of the truth – stage-actors – have taken it up. (3.214)

Orators, then, are to learn from the gesture and speech of their lowly analogues, and Cicero repeatedly cites the talents and teaching methods of the *comoedus* Roscius as *exempla*: “Who would deny that in the movement and posture befitting a speaker the orator has need of Roscius’s gesture and grace?” (*quis neget opus esse oratori, in hoc oratorio motu statuque, Roscii gestum et venustatem?* *De or.* 1.251; cf. 1.129–130, 132, 258; Dugan 2005, pp. 75–171).

Quintilian likewise uses theater to illustrate the principles of *actio*, although he cautions that this *mimesis* of dramatic *mimesis* should not go too far (*Inst.* 11.3, on which see Fantham 1982, 2002; Maier Eichhorn 1989; Graf 1991; cf. *Rhet. Her.* 3.24, 26 and *Cic. De or.* 1.251, 3.220). Conversely, we hear that stage professionals sought to learn from oratorical performance. Roscius and his fellow actor Aesopus, for instance, attended the forum to observe Hortensius (*Val. Max.* 8.10.2). Mutual influence between oratory and drama extends beyond the performative to the verbal and stylistic as well: Cicero (*Brut.* 167) claims that Afranius, a comic playwright, imitated the style of the orator-cum-tragedian C. Titius, whose *argutiae* (“verbal refinements”) adorned both his speeches and his plays.

It is no surprise to find Titius (or indeed Asinius Pollio or Quintus Cicero) composing for the tragic stage and the rostra. Greek and Roman rhetorical texts liken oratory, at its highest and most emotional register, to tragedy (e.g. *Dem.* 18.13; *Hyp. Eux.* 26; *Cic. De or.* 1.228; *Quint. Inst.* 6.1.36), and Cicero perceived a close resemblance between orators and tragedians (*De or.* 3.27). The imperial sophist Nicagoras, in fact, called tragedy “the mother of sophists” (τοῦ σοφιστοῦ μήτηρ: *Philostratus Lives of the Sophists*, 620), and tragedy is frequently quoted in rhetorical handbooks to illustrate types of argumentation and stylistic devices (cf. Castelli 2000). We find interaction between these two genres at an early point in their development in Latin (Manuwald 2013): thus Gaius Gracchus famously drew on Ennius’s *Medea* in the pitiful speech he (probably) performed shortly before his murder (Malcovati ORF³ fr. 61; Dugan 2005, pp. 138–140). So, too, is the stuff of comedy compared to oratory. Cicero and Quintilian refer to comedy in connection with a light and entertaining style (*Cic. De or.* 2.326–329, 3.30; *Quint. Inst.* 6.2.20, 10.1.71), and rhetoricians suggest humor as a means of winning the spectators’ good will (*Arist. Rhet.* 1415b; *Rhet. Her.* 1.10; *Cic. De or.* 2.236). How did this affinity inspire comic playwrights to engage with oratory and vice versa? The question has been well served by scholarship in relation to Aristophanes, Menander, and Terence (cf. Major 2013 on Aristophanes; Carey 2013 on Menander; I discuss Terence below), but Plautus’s connection to rhetoric and oratory remains to be explored.

In what follows I investigate the reception of Plautine comedy in Latin rhetorical texts, with a focus on Catonian oratory. We shall see that Plautus's plays served as a source of inspiration for *rhetores* and an *exemplum* of rhetorical practice both in the author's own time and long after his plays were first performed. I also consider the rhetorical element of Plautine comedy itself. My discussion distills the previous discourse to set out how, exactly, we can discern Plautus's engagement with public speech, and elaborates upon research showing the playwright's familiarity with Greek theory by evincing rhetorical *technē* in the prologues to three plays: *Amphitruo*, *Captivi*, and *Casina*.

“Oratory and Plautus” and “Plautus and Oratory”

I want to begin by seeking to get a sense of the interaction between comedy and oratory in the performative culture of the middle republic. This is a topic virtually untouched by scholarship; indeed, a recent study despairs of ever discerning engagement between republican theater and contemporary oratory due to the latter's fragmentary survival (Manuwald 2014, p. 293). I must dissent. We in fact possess extensive passages of text (Malcovati 1953; <http://www.frodo.gla.ac.uk>); sufficient evidence to attempt to say something about “oratory and Plautus” for the second century BCE. Let us do just that.

Our earliest examples of Latin oratory are from the (now fragmentary) speeches of Cato Maior (234–149 BCE; cf. Cic. *Brut.* 61, 80, 89; *De sen.* 10, 14, 32). Fronto preserves for us a passage from his speech *De sumptu suo*, given in the 150s BCE. This fragment consists of a narrative in which Cato describes the process of editing, with his slave, a previously transcribed document (Sciarrino 2011 nn. 24 and 25 for a full bibliography). Here is the first part of the text(s) (Fro. *Ep. Ant. Imp.* 1.2.11 = Malcovati ORF³ fr. 173):

iussi caudicem proferri, ubi mea oratio scripta erat de ea re, quod sponsionem feceram cum M. Cornelio. tabulae prolatae: maiorum benefacta perlecta: deinde quae ego pro re p. fecissem leguntur. ubi id utrumque perlectum est, deinde scriptum erat in oratione: “numquam ego pecuniam neque meam neque sociorum per ambitionem dilargitus sum.” attat, noli, noli <s>cribere, inquam, istud: nolunt audire. deinde recitavit: “numquam <ego> praefectos per sociorum vestrorum oppida imposivi, qui eorum bona liberos diriperent.” istud quoque dele; nolunt audire.

I ordered the wooden ledger to be brought out, where my speech had been inscribed about that matter – the agreement I had come to with M. Cornelius. The writing tablets were brought out: once the deeds of my ancestors had been read through, then those things I had done on behalf of the state were being read. When both of those parts were read out, thereupon this was written in the speech: “Never have I squandered my money nor that of the allies for bribery.” “Oh *no*. Don't write *that*,” I said. “They don't want to hear it.” Then he recited: “Never have I billeted officers throughout the towns of your allies to plunder their possessions and their children.” “Delete that, too; they don't want to hear it.”

This scene is a *praeteritio*, indicating, according to some, the influence of Greek rhetoric on Cato's work (thus Kennedy 1972, p. 43, but see my discussion below). The author's creative application of this trope and the “metaoratorical” portrait that results, however, have escaped critical notice, as has the passage's comic inspiration.

How, I ask, is Cato's *praeteritio* working, exactly? As it seems to me, the orator manages to say what he "declines" to say by shifting the content to another *oratio* and the speech act to another person in a different moment of time. These are conflated with the present text, speaker, and occasion through *sermocinatio*. Via Cato's dramatic re-enactment, in other words, the *Sponsio cum M. Cornelio* simultaneously is and is *not* the *De sumptu suo*. The latter is depicted as coming into being by means of the former's destruction, for the contentious material that Cato's present audience does not want to hear (but will hear anyway) is deleted off the *tabulae* containing the *Sponsio* and thereby transferred, as it were, into the *De sumptu suo*. This amounts to a meditation on the transformation of medium that occurs in the act of oratorical performance. Just as the text of the *Sponsio* becomes the spoken word in being conveyed from *caudex* to "courtroom," by virtue of its implantation (via deletion!) and subsequent realization in the *De sumptu suo*, so too does an orator turn written content into speech when he delivers his *oratio*. (One may compare Galba's furious eleventh-hour note-writing at Cic. *Brut.* 88–89.) The *Sponsio*'s excised elements come full circle when they are reinscribed as text in the fragment we read, thereby replicating the cycle of composition and recitation involved in speechmaking as an *oratio* goes from a set of rough notes to performance and then finally to polished written version. Further still, the process of erasure itself reflects via inversion the genesis of the text in which it is represented. Roman authors composed by dictating to a slave; in the *De sumptu suo* Cato describes the reverse by having his *servus* read out and erase previously inscribed content, thereby simultaneously destroying one text and creating another.

This passage from the *De sumptu suo* is a *mise-en-abyme* that contemplates writing and performance in the genre of oratory. It is strongly reminiscent of Plautus's embedded letters, which portray on stage the processes of poetic composition and theatrical performance. In a typical comedic inversion, slaves dictate epistolary content to their masters for inscription in texts that represent the script, for these missives both contain the details of each play's deception, and serve to enact the same. Their onstage reading likewise generates an image of performance and lays bare the metamorphosis of written to spoken word that it entails (e.g. *Bacch.* 715–760; cf. Barbiero 2014). Thus, both playwright and orator use internal writing via dictation between master and slave to depict the performance's textual origins and the oral transformation of those texts in the moment of their realization. Cato, I propose, is responding to Plautus's metaliterary epistles, capitalizing on the overlap between oratory and drama to create his own "metaoratorical" speech on the Plautine model in a scene that is quite explicitly constructed as a performed dialogue. It is very likely, after all, that the orator and statesman had been in Plautus's audience at some point: Cato's early adulthood coincides exactly with the playwright's theatrical career.

In the *De sumptu suo*, then, we catch a glimpse of synergy between comic stage and rostra in the middle republic. Is the influence mutual? Before moving on to Plautus's *Nachleben* in later Roman antiquity, I propose to look at the other side of the coin. What of "Plautus and oratory"?

This is a complicated question, for Greek rhetoric was late in coming to Rome – or so says Suetonius (*Rhet.* 1). To support his claim, the author quotes edicts from 161 and 92 BCE aimed at reining in rhetoric's influence. These senatorial efforts were ultimately unsuccessful in curtailing the new discipline, for as we well know, enthusiasm for the Greek-style *ars dicendi* only grew, with study of rhetoric quickly forming the basis of elite

education and its practice becoming indispensable to a political career. What came before this official reaction, however, is not nearly as clear. When had the *rhetores* (nominally?) banished by the edict of 161 – or, indeed, their treatises – come to Rome, and for how long had this *disciplina* been circulating? When was this *technē* of finding the best mode of persuasion for a given situation (Arist. *Rhet.* 1455b) applied to public speech in Latin? Although there was undoubtedly oratory at Rome throughout the early and middle republic (the speech of Appius Claudius Caecus opposing peace with Pyrrhus in 280 BCE, for instance, was paraphrased in verse by Ennius; cf. Cic. *De sen.* 16), the mid-second century is taken as a conservative *terminus post quem* for Roman acquaintance with theorized Greek *eloquentia*, and the edict of 161 BCE as a backlash to a relatively new mode of speech. This cultural transmission is thus posited as taking place during Cato's late career (Kennedy 1972, p. 53), making the identification of Greek rhetorical elements in the orator's own writing controversial (Sciarrino 2011, p. 127 n. 21 for bibliography, to which add Gehrke 1994, pp. 599–607). Plautus's *floruit* at the turn of the second century places him just before this era. So, whereas Terence's prologues from a generation later have excited interest for their adherence to rhetorical structures (Fabia 1888, pp. 283–314; Leo 1960, pp. 135–149; Goldberg 1983), oratorical allusion in Plautus has attracted little critical attention. There is no monograph on the topic, but only a handful of articles (Perutelli 2000; Kemper 2002; Leigh (2004) and scattered references (e.g. recently Manuwald 2013, pp. 241–242; Christenson 2014, pp. 45–50).

And yet it is widely recognized that the language of Plautine comedy is full of so-called rhetorical effect. Plautus employs parachesis, homoeoteleuton, asyndeton, and polyptoton – to name but a few. These devices are described in the Greek handbooks, but appear also to be characteristic of early Latin, for we can find parallels for aspects of Plautus's style in the archaic Roman *carmina*. The playwright's *eloquentia*, then, has been taken to be one of our sole surviving examples of a Roman rhetoric untainted by Greek influence. Comedy is chosen to illustrate “native rhetoric” in a recent companion to Roman oratory, in which Barsby (2007, p. 38) states that:

...the language of [Plautus's] plays is highly rhetorical ... constantly heightened by an exuberant choice of words and the employment (whether conscious or not) of what can be recognized as rhetorical figures. But this must largely represent an untutored native Latin rhetoric, which can be shown to derive from the practices of the early Latin language. (cf. Auhagen 1999)

A domestic Roman style, Barsby contends, is likewise detectable in the fragments of Catonian oratory, on which basis he argues for an “informal and unsystematic” influence between comedy and public speech – a hypothesis that has been raised before.²

This loose classification of Plautus's style as “rhetorical” is problematic. The adjective suggests that these figures are consciously associated with rhetoric *qua* reasoned (if not yet theorized) modes of argument. But the sonorous register of both republican drama and oratory is traceable to a common style of early Latin *which itself lacks a particular association with persuasion*. For example, although Connolly (2007, p. 142) argues that the *carmina* “spring from the imperative to persuade” as prayers, Conte (1999, pp. 19–20) reminds us that the term in fact encompasses a diverse body of texts and speech-acts, including laws, oaths, treatises, and songs like lullabies. Unity among these is to be found

in form, not in content. The term “rhetorical,” then, is a misnomer. Indeed, Plautus’s use of such “rhetorical” effect is not by any means confined to instances of persuasion or to contexts resembling public speech. Similarly, Scodel (1997, p. 489) observes that “tricks of style” are ambiguous indicators of oratorical allusion in Greek drama because of the difficulty associated with determining whether these figures *actually* derive from rhetoric. Scodel suggests two other means of discerning theater’s engagement with oratory: employment of rhetorical argumentation, and depiction or critique of public speech.

There are only three articles that take this approach in focusing specifically on techniques of persuasion and “oratorical moments” in Plautus: Perutelli (2000), Kemper (2002), and Leigh (2004). All three come to an arresting conclusion: namely, that Plautine characters give speeches constructed according to the formalized principles of *inventio* and employ rhetorical *topoi* drawn from Greek theory. Leigh, for example, discerns that the *locus de vita ante acta* is used to obtain pardon for *adulescentes* in oratorical contexts. Thus in *Mostellaria*, the slave Tranio prompts his master Theopropides to present his case in their argument over the young lover Philolaches’s misdeed: “Look, here’s an arbitrator for the both of us, so go on – state your case!” (*nunc utrisque disceptator eccum adest, age disputa!* 1137). When Tranio defends his younger master by appealing to the rhetorical commonplace (“Has he done anything else besides what sons of the best families do?” *numquid aliud fecit nisi quod summis gnati generibus?* 1141), Theopropides calls him an *orator*: “Geez, I’ve got to be careful with you, you’re an all-too-clever speaker” (*hercle mihi tecum cavendum est, nimis qui es orator cautus*, 1142). *Mostellaria*’s erring *adulescens* has had some rhetorical training, too: Perutelli argues that Philolaches employs the strategy of *verba adcommodata* in his comparison of a man’s life to a house (84–156). In *Captivi*, Kemper detects rhetorical underpinnings in Tyndarus’s persuasive speech. Christenson has also contributed to this discourse. His commentary on *Amphitruo* (2000) identifies rhetorical features in the prologue (on which see below, pp. 399–401), and more recently (2014, pp. 45–50), he has argued that Megaronides’s extended *oratio* in *Aulularia* (475–535) is “a brilliant specimen of contemporary rhetoric” with a *captatio benevolentiae* and *prosopopoeia*, as well as a recognizable *peroratio*.

This research is important for two reasons. First, it establishes a precedent for credibly detecting Plautus’s engagement with and parody of oratory by concentrating on contexts of persuasion and scenarios that evoke public speech. Second, its revelation that Plautus demonstrates acquaintance with theorized Greek *eloquentia* in these “oratorical moments” challenges the accepted timeline by providing compelling evidence that rhetoric had reached Rome 40 years or so before the edict of 161 BCE (so Leigh 2004, p. 332). I propose to add to this body of evidence in the hopes that more work will follow. A comprehensive study of the topic is a *desideratum*: a better understanding of how Plautus’s *personae* employ the conventions of oratory to blur the already-blurry line between *rhetor* and *actor* (particularly within the metatheatrical Plautine universe where characters are also patently actors) will not only deepen our appreciation of the playwright’s dramaturgy, but also shed light on the state of contemporary oratory.

What, finally, of the objection that rhetorical elements in Plautus are holdovers from the Greek originals (e.g. Kennedy 1972, p. 31)? The traditional critical tendency to trace literary (and thus mostly Greek) elements of Plautine comedy to the source texts is an antiquated approach that relies on speculative reconstructions of lost plays and assumes a priori the

Latin playwright's ignorance. *In nuce*, it is my position that we should give Plautus credit for what we find in his texts unless we have definitive proof otherwise.³

Persuasion in the Prologue

Drama's close affinity to oratory comes through especially in the prologue, whose resemblance to the *exordium* was observed by Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1414b). Like an orator, the *prologus* addresses his spectators directly, seeking to render them *adventi*, *dociles*, and *benivoli* ("attentive, receptive, well-disposed," *Rhet. Her.* 1.4), and thus to gain their sympathy in sharing his opinion of the play as worth watching. So, too, do both *prologizon* and *rhetor* give the backstory, as well as a preview of what is to come in the performance. When a prologue-speaker explicitly assumes a stance as a pleader, this likeness between the two speech acts is made almost complete and oratory stands as an obvious intertext. Terence employs this tactic in his polemical prologues – a fact often remarked upon, although, as Sharrock (2009, pp. 68–69) points out, this pose is something he may have learned from his comic predecessor. Indeed, such is Mercury's role in the prologue to *Amphitruo*:

*iustam rem et facilem esse oratam a vobis volo,
nam iustae ab iustis iustus sum orator datus.*

I want to prevail upon you regarding a just and simple matter,
for I've been given as a just speaker of a just cause [to be obtained] from those who are
themselves just. (33–34)

Although Christenson (2000, pp. 139–140) claims that *orator* here means first and foremost "envoy" rather than *rhetor*, he concedes that given the significant overlap between the two terms the audience would have understood a secondary reference to judicial advocacy. Mercury, in other words, is presenting himself not only as a pleader come at Jupiter's behest, but also as a public speaker. I would argue that this rhetorical valence is the primary one. In a section of the play that is already suggestive of oratory, the god addresses the audience as *aequi et iusti ... arbitri* ("fair and just judges," 16), and soon launches into a discussion of theatrical *ambitio* (canvassing or soliciting of votes, 64–89). Not only is the scenario per se evocative of public speech, but (as Christenson points out) Mercury employs rhetorical devices and modes of argument throughout.

Let us have a look at one such instance in *Amphitruo*. After declining to enumerate Jupiter's good deeds to humanity "as other gods do in tragedies" (*ut alios [deos] in tragoediis*, 41) but in the process doing so anyway (a clever use of *praeteritio*), Mercury pretends to notice the spectators' distress at his mention of tragedy in what is supposed to be a comedy:

*quid? contraxistis frontem quia tragoediam
dixi futuram hanc? deus sum, commutavero.*

What? You're knitting your brows because a *tragedy*
I said this play would be? I'm a god, I'll change it up. (52–53)

The god anticipates and addresses his spectators' (imagined) reaction, dissolving their anxiety before it can weaken his position. This is *prokatalipsis* or *praesumptio* (also called *anticipatio*), a rhetorical strategy employed to preempt an argument that may prove detrimental to one's case (Christenson 2000, p. 147; for the device; cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1432b11; *Rhet. Her.* 4.13). Quintilian tells us that this device is especially common in the *exordium* (*Inst.* 9.2.17); that is, precisely where we find it here – in the theatrical equivalent to the *prooimion*. This oratorical flavor of *Amphitruo*'s prologue relates to the comedy's status as a *tragicomoedia*. The audience needs to be persuaded to watch the hybrid show and lend it their sympathies, so Plautus makes of his divine *prologus* an orator who uses the tactics of rhetoric to keep them in their seats. It is all a pose, of course, which is part of the fun. Mercury's imitation of a *rhetor* turns the audience into a jury on the fence: is this *tragicomoedia* worth our attention or not?

Two other Plautine prologue-speakers employ a similar technique of forestalling dissent in *fabulae* that share with *Amphitruo* an element of unconventionality and therefore the "need" to convince the audience *ad audiendum*. Akin to *Amphitruo* is *Captivi*, a comedy that likewise threatens to be derailed by elements of tragedy. The *prologus*, who calls the spectators *testes* (witnesses, 3) and *iudices iustissimi* ("most just judges," 67), confutes their generic apprehensions in "reaction" to the revelation that this comedy takes place during wartime:

ne vereamini
quia bellum Aetolis esse dixi cum Aleis:
foris illic extra scaenam fient proelia.
nam hoc paene iniquom est, comico choragio
conari desubito agere nos tragoediam.

Don't be nervous
because I said that the Aetolians are at war with the Eleans:
outside, over there, offstage will the battles take place.
After all, that's almost a dirty trick, for us to all of a sudden
try to stage a tragedy with a comic crew. (58–62)

Casina's prologue-speaker, on the other hand, is charged with explaining away a *novum aliquid* that has never before appeared on the stage:

sunt hic inter se quos nunc credo dicere:
'quaeso, hercle, quid istuc est? serviles nuptiae?
servin uxorem ducent aut poscent sibi?
novom attulerunt, quod fit nusquam gentium'.
at ego aiio id fieri in Graecia et Carthagini,
et hic nostra terra in Apulia;
maioreque opere ibi serviles nuptiae
quam liberales etiam curari solent.

There are people here who, I think, now say amongst themselves:
"Please – what's that, by Hercules? A *slave marriage*?

So slaves will take wives or ask for them?
 They've brought on something new, which happens nowhere in the world."
 But I say that it does happen in Greece and Carthage,
 and here in our land in Apulia;
 there they make a greater effort for slave weddings
 than they do for those of the free. (67–74)

This prologue-speaker goes so far as to impersonate the spectators' dismay by using the classic *tis-Rede* (someone will say...) formula. He then refutes their potential objection by offering specific *exempla*, a device of *confutatio* called *hypophora* or *subiectio* (cf. *Rhet. Her.* 4.33). As if in a court of law, the speaker goes on to ask for a judge to defend the veracity of his statement (76). In this instance, Plautus's use of rhetoric cannot be but all his own. The ethnic displacement of comic setting whereby Latin-speaking actors pretend to be Greek-speaking *personae* in Greece is unique to the *fabula palliata*, and thus we can take this rhetorical *apologia* based on the strange plot's cultural "otherness" as firmly Plautine.

Plautus's play on rhetoric in the prologue is a form of comic parody that capitalizes upon the likeness of drama and oratory to cut the higher genre down to size, using it to defend something as lewd (to the Romans) as a slave wedding. This dynamic would be heightened if, as seems likely, these performances were often staged in the forum – the very *locus* of public speech at Rome (Marshall 2006, pp. 40–44). The oratorical intertext also works to highlight Plautus's dramatic innovations. By pretending that they are worried or shocked (whether they are or not), the playwright dictates to the spectators his desired response. Plautus thereby draws attention to unusual elements that push comedy's generic boundaries and introduce novelty on the stage – one of his self-proclaimed poetic priorities (cf. *Pseud.* 568–570). This, too, is a rhetorical technique. In discussing *exordia*, the *auctor ad Herennium* advises promising the "new and unusual" as a means of *captatio benevolentiae* (*Rhet. Her.* 1.7).

Plautus in the "Classroom" and in the "Courtroom"

To judge from its long afterlife in Latin oratorical texts, ancient readers of Plautine comedy perceived its rhetorical nature. We find Plautus already in the first surviving handbooks in Latin – the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Cicero's *De Inventione* (although there were probably earlier treatises, now lost: cf. Culpepper Stroup 2007, p. 31). Both quote the same lines from a speech of *Trinummus*'s Megaronides to illustrate faulty argumentation:

*amicum castigare ob meritam noxiam
 immoene est facinus, verum in aetate utile
 et conducibile. nam ego amicum hodie meum
 concastigabo pro commerita noxia.*

To castigate a friend because of an offense committed
 is an unpleasant deed, but useful in life

and advisable. **For today my friend
shall I reprimand for an offense he is guilty of.**
(Cic. *Inv.* 1.95; *Rhet. Her.* 2.33; *Trin.* 23-26)

The *senex*'s reasoning (*ratio*, in bold) is weak in that it does not support the proposition (*propositio*) preceding it. Rather than what is expedient or proper, the *ratio* is based on what Megaronides is about to do. Plautus is thus cited to illustrate a *failure* of rhetoric. Is this evidence of his rhetorical ignorance? The dramatic context suggests otherwise. At this point in the play, Megaronides is about to rebuke his friend Callicles, whom he suspects of exploiting the *adulescens* Lesbonicus by buying his ancestral home. But Megaronides (a figure of fun throughout the play) is mistaken. Callicles is purchasing the property not for profit but to save a treasure buried (unbeknownst to Lesbonicus) within. Plautus uses deliberately flawed *eloquentia* to convey the busybody's pompous stupidity and characterize him as absurd. Megaronides's unfounded reprimand and empty moralizing, that is, are matched by his shoddy rhetoric. Whether or not Cicero and the *auctor ad Herennium* recognized Plautus's use of rhetoric to characterize Megaronides is another question, although one suspects that they did, for there is other evidence to suggest that these Latin rhetoricians perceived the "arms of rhetoric" in Plautus's plays: Leigh (2004, p. 332) has shown that the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*'s description of the *locus de vita ante acta* draws directly upon scenes from Plautine comedy in which this commonplace is invoked. Might these early treatises' engagement with Plautus go yet further still? The prospect is promising and warrants investigation.

Unlike his frequent use of Terence (Manuwald 2014) elsewhere in his rhetorical output, Cicero references Plautus only occasionally, and purely as a model of style. He considers the playwright's work an *exemplum* of elegant and polished humor in the *De officiis* (1.104), and Crassus praises the "uncorrupted antiquity" of Plautine language in the *De oratore* (3.45). Quintilian also admired Plautus as a *philologos*: in his "reading list" for students, the rhetorician repeats Aelius Stilo's opinion that if the Muses had spoken Latin, they would have chosen the language of Plautus (*Inst.* 10.99; see Chapter 25, p. 380). But in the view of Quintilian, neither Plautus nor his comic colleagues are fit for imitation. Whereas Menander alone is all but sufficient as a rhetorical model, Quintilian proclaims that Roman comedy "limps" in comparison to its Greek originals, a judgment that would itself have a long afterlife in classical scholarship. The Second Sophistic, however, ushered in a resurgence of interest in Plautus. May (2013, p. 757) has shown that his plays were, for archaizing orators, a "teaching tool and a quarry for elegant phrases."

Comedy was also put to work in oratory "as an instrument of persuasion before Roman juries" (Goldberg 2005, p. 89). Of particular note is Cicero's extensive use of comedy in the *Pro Caelio* (Geffcken 1973; Leigh 2004), in which the orator avails himself of comic convention to cast Caelius and his ex-lover Clodia in the roles of *adulescens* and *meretrix*, using four *prosopopoeiae* (30–38) to convince the jury to "read" the case as a comic plot. Although the *Pro Caelio* does not contain any specifically Plautine material (rather, the *prosopopoeiae* feature a harsh father from Caecilius and a lenient one from Terence), Hughes (1997, 1998) sees Cicero using Plautus as a means of characterization in the *Pro*

Roscio Amerino and *In Pisonem*. Apuleius's use of Plautine comedy has also attracted comment. May (2006) shows that the author draws upon the playwright in his *Apologia* and *Florida*, alluding to and quoting the corpus, as well as drawing upon Plautine *personae* for character portrayal.

Much of Plautine reception in Latin oratory, however, remains to be discovered. In particular, the corpora of imperial *declamationes*, such as those of Calpurnius Flaccus, call out for study. These feature the *personae* and plots of Roman comedy: we find *meretrices*, *milites*, *puellae raptae*, *adulescentes*, and *lenones*, as well as complicated family relations. But the comic universe has been reconfigured, for these rhetorical exercises replace the genre's happy ending with a much bleaker outcome.

Conclusion

As I hope to have shown with this brief survey, the interaction between Plautine comedy and oratory is a fascinating, if largely unexplored, topic. After sailing forth from the Piraeus (Cic. *Brut.* 51), *eloquentia* arrived at Rome rather earlier than previously thought, precipitating already in the middle republic a relationship between rostra and comic stage that is worth a closer look.

NOTES

- 1 There are, of course, important differences between these two *actores*: an oratorical *actor* composes his own "script" for performance that is (at least ostensibly) based in truth, as opposed to the fictional *mimesis* of the stage. See below on Cic. *De or.* 2.189.
- 2 Leo (1913, pp. 37–38) argued for influence moving from oratory into verse in our period; Fraenkel (2007, pp. 241–242) contra. Cf. Scodel (1997, p. 500) on the influence of contemporary rhetoric in Plautus.
- 3 See Fontaine (2014) for evidence of a Greek "creative inspiration" behind Philolaches' *oratio* at *Most.* 84–156, a passage Perutelli (2000) reads as overtly rhetorical. And yet even here Plautus' retention of his model's (*ex hypothesi*) oratorical flavor in the Latin (Philolaches uses *termini technici* like *exemplum* and *argumentum*) suggests his own and his audiences' acquaintance with *eloquentia*.

FURTHER READING

The notion of oratorical allusion in Greek drama has been problematized by Sansone (2012): against the *communis opinio* that rhetoric was introduced to Athens via Sicily in the later fifth century BCE, Sansone contends that it was developed by the Greek tragedians as a means of presenting persuasion on the stage and only theorized thereafter. Habinek (1985, pp. 187–200) observes the influence of archaic verse on the colometry of early Latin speeches. For Cicero as a figure *in* drama, see Manuwald (2018).

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The Textual Tradition of Plautus

Rolando Ferri

Plautus and Republican Scholarship

The history of the text of Plautus begins with scripts of which we have no direct knowledge. They were destined only for the use of actors and for circulation among theater professionals, such as other company directors, as well as perhaps the Roman magistrates who commissioned the plays when they kept a copy in their archives for the record. In Plautus's lifetime, comic performances were not regarded as part of a cherished cultural heritage: comedies were shows for an indistinct audience of patricians, plebeians, and slaves, and in third- and second-century Rome there was presumably no market for books containing comic texts in Latin, and probably not yet even the intellectual background for accepting them as part of the Roman heritage (Goldberg 2005): the authors themselves, to judge from the shadowy, elusive outlines in our sources, were not prominent social personalities, and they may have been disinclined to follow the trail of their texts after the show.

In fact, the transition from stage script and *aide-mémoire* to book involves a process of considerable abstraction: readers must supply the stage action with their imagination, and there is no narrator providing the main narrative and descriptive frame of the story as in other literary genres. To all appearances, in the primitive scripts there was no well-established system for aiding the visualization of the stage action, because what we call stage directions (some ancient sources knew them as *παρεπιγραφαί*) were limited, so far as we know, to mostly noises and musical accompaniment. Other crucial descriptive elements, such as stage movement, gestures, expression, and posture, were only registered by such paratextual annotations to a very limited extent (Gammacurta 2006, pp. 249–251); and when commentators and scholia provide information on action and voice delivery, it must be regarded as at best an informed guess, not knowledge at first-hand of what went on

(Ferri 2016, pp. 239–259). Of course, there is the possibility that some comic texts were illustrated from a very early age, but that was an expensive feature, and one that went with expensive reading copies of late antiquity, such as, for drama, the famous Vat. Lat. 3868 (now online, http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.3868), a Carolingian copy of a late-antique, lavishly illustrated MS of Terence.

It is a fair guess that the transformation from comic scripts to cultural icons and syllabus authors was driven by an imperial aspiration among some sections of the Roman political and intellectual elite to produce in the theater a competitor for the great fifth-century stars of the Attic canon. Admiration for the language of Plautus as an instance of “pure” Latin was prominent only from a later date in Roman cultural history, and the appreciation of comic humor per se was not strong or culturally prestigious enough to make comedy recommended for school syllabi. What we read today in modern critical editions is descended not from what Plautus first composed for putting the play on stage, but from the reading copies put on the market for learned and sophisticated readers of the Imperial age, several centuries after the first performances of the originals, and at a point when such texts were almost certainly no longer performed.

There seem to have been, however, reading copies of Plautus circulating at a much earlier time, still in the late Republican period, when an unknown scholar put together a first edition of Plautus’s *Opera omnia*. We don’t know his name or his motives, nor who commissioned and financed the work, though Cesare Questa (1984a, p. 77) and Sander Goldberg (2005, pp. 61–62) propose Aelius Stilo. We may reconstruct some of this unknown scholar’s methodology and work process. For example, we know that he followed the model of the Alexandrian critics, especially Aristophanes of Byzantium (c. 257–180 BCE), who was most prominent for his work on the comic writers and, to a lesser extent, the tragic poets. His text of the tragedians was known to have been drawn from the official copy of the Athenian archives, named after the archon Lycurgus who allegedly had set up the document (Battezzato 2003). Aristophanes was also praised for a careful colometry of the lyrical parts and the addition of critical signs, especially the *obelus*, for marking suspected parts of the text. The Lycurgan copy, however, was already a version that included interpolations and modifications by actors and poets, the so-called διασκευαί (Barrett 1964, p. 47; Pfeiffer 1968, pp. 189–194; Lehrs 1882, pp. 331–332; Slater 1986). Recent discussions of the methodology of Alexandrian scholars suggest that these scholars treated stage scripts with some flexibility, possibly drawing on them to cull useful variants and collate them against the Lycurgan master copy (Pauscello 2006).

On closer analysis, however, the work of the unknown Roman scholar followed unexplored paths, and he displayed skills and an initiative that place his output somewhat apart from the Alexandrian predecessors, although they nevertheless remained an important reference point for his work. First, the Roman scholar did not have an established tradition of official copies comparable to the Lycurgan set used by the Alexandrian scholars. Second, the Greek fifth-century poets were already canonized in their lifetime, and certainly even more so by the time Aristophanes edited them. Plautus did not possess the same status, and the texts contained and transmitted in the scripts were therefore in a state of greater flux and uncertainty. This is reflected in the state of the Republican edition, which included in continuous sequence alternate scenes that originally had belonged to conflicting versions; the editor ostensibly sought out scripts reflecting subsequent performances and

included them in a continuous run (see below on *Poenulus*). This procedure is different from expunging an interpolation, as the final text is the result of accretion from different sources, and it betrays either an aesthetic stance more open to variants, or the editor's bewilderment and doubts about authenticity. This procedure has a famous parallel in the composition of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, the Pentateuch, in which modern scholarship has recognized the weaving together of four different traditions, often producing doublets that were nevertheless included by the ancient editors of the Hebrew Bible as if parts of a continuous narrative (Friedman 1987, pp. 50–65). Students of Plautus, since antiquity, have devoted a great deal of attention to separating the authentic from the interpolated Plautus. A modern scholar, Otto Zwierlein, devoted four important books to the issue: his main contention is that the great majority of the double versions present in the comedies go back to the second century BCE, one or two generations after Plautus's death, when the plays were put on stage by different companies and adapted to the needs and expertise of different casts of actors (1990–1992). Ancient scholars were of course aware of the existence of interpolated versions. The fourth-century grammarian Charisius (*Gramm.* p. 266 Barwick), quoting line 545 from *Bacchides* in his chapter on adverbs, comments, *in quibusdam non feruntur* ("these lines are not present in some manuscripts"), and as it happens the line is part of a sequence (540–551) omitted by the oldest manuscript, *A* (on the "revival" text and the conflicting evidence of the two families of Plautus MSS, see pp. 411–414).

The earliest imitations of Plautus outside a theatrical context appear in Lucilius (c. 130 BCE); in the same period, interest in dramaturgical questions and in the authenticity of some of Plautus's plays is revealed by fragments of Accius (Deufert 2002, pp. 44–47). Was Accius also a driving force behind the Plautus industry? He would have had the resources to deploy assistants seeking out the huge output in the various archives. Also important, however, is recalling that the edition was a collection of rolls, each containing perhaps a single comedy, two at the most. It may have taken a large space on the shelf, or several boxes, if it included all comedies ascribed to Plautus, which ran to 130. Another feature of this "edition" was a careful arrangement of the colometry, the metrical structure of the lyric parts. Lyric passages were highlighted by indenting (*eisthesis*), which made them stand out on the page against the spoken parts in trochaics or senarii, and there were several different types of *eisthesis* to distinguish different metrical systems (Questa 1984a, pp. 23–24).

Plautus was not the only author whose works made the transition from actors' scripts to library shelves at this period. W.M. Lindsay, in his fundamental study of the sources of Nonius Marcellus (1901, pp. 7–10) showed conclusively that this lexicographer, living as late as the fourth century in the town of Thubursicum in Northern Algeria, had access to volumes of the dramas of Ennius, Pacuvius, and Accius as well as, among the comic writers, Novius, Afranius, Turpilius, and Pomponius. However, these books must have been bibliographical rarities, and probably mostly rolls rather than codices, the more recent and durable format, although even on this there is no general agreement (Gatti 2011, pp. 49–62). Unfortunately, not much is known about the characteristics of these editions, apart from the fact that they ordered plays alphabetically by title, and that probably meters and colometries were well understood, perhaps in a way not dissimilar from that described above for Plautus. Outside the circles of specialists such as Nonius or grammatical writers, these authors were probably little read and gradually disappeared during the early Empire.

The Second-Century Edition and the Antiquarian Revival of Early Latin

The next phase in the history of the transmission of this text is obscure and can only be guessed at from indirect and circumstantial evidence. In the Augustan period, early Latin authors gradually fell out of favor, perhaps out of the great change in literary standards and concomitantly with the great explosion of new talents and great works, such as the *Aeneid*, Catullus's *Carmina*, the *Odes* of Horace, and elegiac poetry. The watershed in Roman literary history occurs at some point between Quintilian, who does not even mention Plautus in his précis of literary authors, singling out only Afranius and Terence for praise, and Fronto, a couple of generations later. Fronto, an African from Cirta, is the first to draw extensively from Plautus, whom he greatly loved and admired.

There is evidence that an archaizing trend in the literary taste in the second century produced new interest and poured new intellectual energies into the Plautus workshops. Fronto, Apuleius, and Gellius are the main representatives of the new archaizing movement, which led to a revival of interest for Plautus. The questions arise whether such change went hand in hand with the establishment of a new edition, and what the features were of books (in roll format) produced in this age. The great German scholar Friedrich Leo suggested that a new edition had been composed by the scholar Valerius Probus. Our main source for Probus's life (Suet. *Gramm. et rhet.* 24) says that he was from Berytus, modern day Beirut, then a Latin colony and a focal point for Latin studies for the whole Greek East even into the sixth century. He was appalled at the state of the copies of early Roman authors that came into his hands and poured great energy into reviving study of early poets (Leo 1895, pp. 21–23). However, although a great deal is known about Probus's output on other authors, most famously Vergil, there is virtually nothing connecting Probus and Plautus, and it is doubted that he produced a new edition by seeking out the best manuscripts and collating them, or annotating variants and suggesting expunctions (cf. Zetzel 2018, pp. 70–74).

At least one element seems certain: the innovative feature of the division of plays into scenes by means of scene titles containing the names and the roles of the speaking parts, which was not a feature of Greek dramatic scripts. Scene headings were obviously not visible on stage: it was only a way of making the stage action visible in reading copies, and it is unlikely to have been devised, at least as we have it, by stage directors, because routinely such scene headings disregard all non-speaking parts, which are clearly important and relevant for a director. A passage in Gellius (NA 10.3.19) is, in my view convincingly, adduced in support of this view (Deufert 2002, pp. 221–223) because Gellius describes the Roman magistrates' retinue, the *Bruttiani*, as acting "in the capacity of those who are called 'floggers' in the plays, *lorarii*." Such a word, in fact, is not found anywhere in the text of an extant Roman play, and is rare in Latin, where it generally means "makers of hides." The required meaning occurs basically only in the scene-headings for those individual scenes in which such characters are present and pronounce a line. This suggests that Gellius was familiar with a text form that had such a paratext, and it was so normal for him as to become an essential part of the "play" (*fabula*). Indeed, the first clues that speak of Roman drama as divided into *scenes* are at the end of the second or the beginning of the

third century, when in Apuleius and Tertullian we encounter the first occurrences of the word *scaena* used with the same sense as English “scene,” as “a distinct unit in a longer dramatic action” (Ferri 2008, pp. 675–681).

With Gellius, we have reached the second half of the second century, a time in which we can reconstruct the circulation of an edition of Plautus containing only a selection of 21 plays thought to be authentic, in rolls, not codex format, containing division into scenes (acts seem to have been a topic for scholarly discussion but are not marked in our earliest manuscripts), sigla for all speaking parts (usually Greek letters, Α, Β, Γ, Δ, regardless of characters’ names), stichometric counts at the end of singles scenes, abbreviations for marking sung or spoken parts as C(ANTICVM) and D(I)V(ERBIVM), and a careful, accurate presentation of the text highlighting metrical differences by the means of a regular system of indentation of the lines. Most of these, except the metrical *argumenta* and, crucially, scene-headings, were inherited from the Republican edition.

The Archetype of the Direct Tradition and the Fifth-Century Division into Two Branches

There is a wide chronological gap between the second-century edition, sometimes called “Hadrianic,” and the emergence of the direct manuscript tradition in the fifth century. In the meantime, Plautus continued to circulate, but we catch a glimpse of what its text was like only from lexicographical authors and glossaries, and it is not simple to understand how these materials crossed paths with the direct tradition. The most important of these works is Nonius Marcellus’s *De compendiosa doctrina*, written in Africa at the end of the fourth century, a vocabulary of early Latin drawing its lemmata from individual authors as well as specialized glossaries of early Latin. Nonius’s text, when we can compare it with the direct tradition, yields independent and even better readings, even if he ultimately depends on the same second-century edition as our extant manuscripts (Deufert 2002, pp. 320–329). Our earliest manuscript witness is the Ambrosian palimpsest (*A*, Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, formerly G 82 sup. now S.P.9/13-20, V century). This manuscript must have come to Milan from the northern Italian monastery of Bobbio, whence it was removed at some point in the fifteenth century. In 1815, the Italian Angelo Mai, prefect of the Ambrosian Library, recognized traces of an ancient script beneath a sixth century copy of a Vulgate *Book of Kings*, which he set out to decipher with the use of chemical reagents. The chemicals damaged the manuscript very badly, but Mai and later scholars, most notably Wilhelm Studemund (1889), were able to extract a great deal from it. In fact, three ancient books had been reused, after washing away their texts: Plautus’s comedies, Seneca’s tragedies, and a Gothic Bible. The ancient Plautus book comprised, in 89 quires at least, the 21 plays of the selection, including *Vidularia* (although nothing of *Amphitruo*, *Asinaria*, or *Aulularia* is extant). *A* was a conscientious edition with some scholarly ambitions: it was provided with production notices (extant only for *Stichus* and *Pseudolus*) and division into scenes, and it contained a carefully edited text that tended to eliminate dittographies (Pasquali 1952, pp. 333–335).

A produced no known descendants in the manuscript tradition of Plautus before a church scribe washed away its text to make room for Scripture. In France, however,

another late-antique manuscript of the comedies, *Π*, was the origin of a second family of manuscripts, the one to which all remaining witnesses belong. This is called the “Palatine” (*P*) family, because two of its most important representatives, *B* and *C* (see below) were once in the library of the Elector Palatine at Heidelberg, ransacked by the Catholic army in the Thirty Years War and brought to Rome as a gift to the Pope. About two hundred manuscripts of Plautus altogether have come to us (Tontini 2002b; Tontini 2010), but almost all of them are Humanist apographs of *D*, and for the most part nineteenth- and early twentieth-century editors of Plautus relied only on *A* and the three oldest manuscripts of the Palatine branch.

The crucial representatives of the Palatine group of manuscripts are *B* (Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. Lat. 1615, http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Pal.lat.1615), *C* (Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Pal. Lat. 1613, <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpl1613/0126>), and *D*, (Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 3870, http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.3870, also known as *Ursinianus* from the name of an original possessor, Cardinal Fulvio Orsini), all dating from the tenth or eleventh century and written in German *scriptoria*. Of these, only *B* has the complete text of the 20 plays, including the *incipit* of the 21st, *Vidularia*. Both *C* and *D* offer shortened versions of this list, with only 12 plays in *C* and 16 in *D*. This sundering happened because the ancestor of the *P*-group was a very long manuscript, and it must have been dismembered for speedier copying of separate parts, producing descendants with a defective corpus such as *C* and *D*.

Sixteenth-century scholars also had access to another witness related to the Palatine family and subsequently lost: *T*, the so-called *codex Turnebi*, named for its original discoverer, Adrien de Turnèbe, who found and collated it in the Benedictine abbey of Sainte Colombe de Sens, in Bourgogne. In fact, Codex *T* is only known imperfectly, from Turnèbe’s marginalia (transcribed by yet another French scholar, François Duaren, in a printed Plautus edition in his possession). These extracts confirm that Turnèbe’s manuscript was related to *BCD*, with which it shared important corruptions and lacunae. However, *T* also preserved correct readings absent in the other manuscripts of the *P* group, and of such quality that they cannot have been arrived at by conjecture (Lindsay 1898, pp. 7–8). *T* therefore was a twin of the parent manuscript of the extant *P* group. For example, in the *Rudens*, 698–699 (*illos scelestos ... fac ut ulciscare nosque ut hanc tua pace aram opsidere / patiare: elautae ambae sumus opera Neptuni noctu*, “avenge us on those criminals ... and allow us to sit at your altar with your permission. We were both washed clean by Neptune’s doing last night”), a prayer to Venus pronounced by the main female character, Palaestra, all *P*-manuscripts, as well as *T*, had lost the initial words in the lines. *B*, the best representative of *P*, leaves a blank at the beginning of each line to show that the exemplar was defective, that is it had lost the left side of a page, or the ink had been damaged by either water or something else. On the other hand, *T* preserves a difficult word at *Poenulus* 977: *facies quidem edepol Punica est. gugga est homo* (“He looks Carthaginian enough, truly. The fellow is a *gugga*”; probably racial abuse identifying the foreign-looking man), a passage where all other *P*-manuscripts have only the first half-line, *facies quidem edepol*.

The two families of manuscripts, *A* and *P*, differ over a sizeable number of individual readings, as well as displacements and omissions, and finally additions of single words and

even groups of lines. Lindsay (1904, pp. 142–144) attempted to trace back these divergences to an early time in the history of the text of Plautus, when there still survived a manuscript derived from the original of Plautus and another, later manuscript descended from a “revival text,” a script of a company manager putting Plautus on stage at some point after the playwright’s demise. But is this view tenable?

The strongest argument against it is the presence of a significant number of common, even trivial, errors shared by the two families. If the two branches could really be traced to the earliest stages of the Plautus tradition, such mistakes should not be there: they could not possibly go back to a Plautus autograph or autographs (Deufert 2002, pp. 302–316). A straightforward case of error common to *A* and *P* occurs at *Poenulus* 1179–79a, an aria in anapaests where one of the female main characters describes the temple of Venus with these words: *aras tus, myrrhinus, omnis odor / complebat* (‘Incense, myrrh, and every aroma filled the altars’), in which the two branches displayed a corrupt text, *Arabus* (*Arabius* in *P*), that marred the meter. A more interesting case occurs in *Pseudolus*, in a passage where the protagonist describes the peculiar walk of the pimp, not walking ahead but slanting along the walls: *ut transuorsus, non prouorsus cedit, quasi cancer solet*. (“how he sidles sidewise, not forwards, just like a crab,” 955). The text printed here was preserved only by an indirect source, the grammarian Varro (*Ling.* 7.81), in a discussion of adverbs. Varro incidentally preserves, in the accompanying commentary of the line, a description of the action as he may have seen it onstage, letting us know something of the amble/way of walking of the leno that is otherwise not evident from the text:

Prouersus “straight ahead” is said of a man who is turned toward that which is in front of him; and therefore he who is going out into the vestibule, which is at the front of the house, is said *prodire* “to go forth” or *procedere* “to proceed.” But since the brothel-keeper was not doing this, but was going sidewise along the wall, Plautus said “how sidewise” (transl. R.G. Kent).

Here Varro preserves the correct reading against both branches of the manuscript tradition, both with the reading *non prorsus uerum ex transuerso* (Deufert 2002, pp. 149–150).

There are also several other lines of argument to counter Lindsay’s thesis. Most notably, *Poenulus* has two, arguably even three, competing endings, presumably the result of combination of scripts from different companies. Both our branches seem to have preserved this compilation: if *P* had been the “revival” text and *A* Plautus’s own copy, they would conceivably have transmitted one or the other ending, but not both (or all three).

It is therefore inevitable to assume that a single manuscript, earlier than *A* and *Π*, was the last common ancestor of the direct tradition. Scholars give this reconstructed manuscript the siglum Ω. It must have been written at some point in the fourth or fifth century, and it already included only 21 comedies, like the “Hadrianic” edition, of which it had inherited all main paratextual and editorial features. It was marred by numerous copy errors, sometimes explanatory glosses, which had been in origin interlinear or marginal explanations that migrated into the text to replace an obscure word, in an age that knew little or nothing of early dramatic meters and was therefore deaf to Plautus’s elaborate rhythms.

A strong clue to a common origin of our manuscript from an archetype already in codex format is the arbitrary division into two lines of any line 45 to 50 syllables long, as happens

in modern editions of Plautus when a trochaic octonarius has too many syllables to fit the page layout or the printing cage. In rolls, the right-hand margin was not predetermined, and a verse with one or more syllables than average would not greatly matter. In codices, the “page mirror” was more rigidly defined, and thus an ancient editor devised a system for indicating that a word or two belonged to the previous line even when written underneath. This overflowing below the line was not based on metrical incisions, but was arbitrarily chosen to suit scribal convenience. The identical occurrence of line divisions in two widely separated branches of the manuscript tradition is a sure sign of a common origin that enables us to trace it to the last common ancestor of the two families, and it proves that the ancestor was already a codex rather than a series of rolls.

Plautus was not known or studied widely in the Middle Ages, but the first eight comedies (*Amphitruo*, *Asinaria*, *Aulularia*, *Captivi*, *Curculio*, *Casina*, *Cistellaria*, and *Epidicus*) had some circulation at least in the eleventh century and later. This is the period from which we can date a group of manuscripts written in France and Southern England, two areas with close cultural ties. These manuscripts (whose *sigla* in modern critical editions are *EVJO*) contain only the first eight comedies, or parts of these, and are shown by several significant errors to form a separate, but not inferior, branch in the *P* family of manuscripts (Chelius 1989, pp. 130–135). They are of relatively limited value for editors because of the small portion of text they contain, but they preserve a few correct readings against the rest of the *P* branch. The most significant of these manuscripts is probably *J* (London, British Library, Royal 15.C.XI), written at Salisbury Cathedral at the end of the eleventh century or at the beginning of the twelfth. It is the product of careful copying and revising, revealing the hand of a scholar capable of correcting a faulty text by conjecture and perhaps comparing other manuscript sources. For example, *J* preserves the correct Greek text at *Casina* 729, *dabo tibi μέγα κακόν* (“I’m gonna give you *un chingadazo*”/“I’m gonna *te faire très mal*”), albeit in the transliterated form *meca cachon*, against all other *P* manuscripts except *T*.

In 1429, the great scholar and theologian Nicolaus Cusanus discovered in the Cologne Cathedral Library codex *D*, which was subsequently brought to Italy and gave rise to numerous copies. The Humanist reception of Plautus in Italy was a product of this discovery (Sabbadini 1905, pp. 111–112; Sabbadini 1914, pp. 327–352; Questa 1984b, pp. 174–191), although some Italian Humanist sources seem to have been influenced by the French “eight plays” manuscripts (Questa 1991, p. 693).

The Early Printed Editions and the Nineteenth-Century “Rediscovery” of Plautus

The first printed edition of the twenty comedies was edited by Giorgio Merula and was published in Milan in 1472. Its documentary foundations were two or three manuscripts of the *Itala recensio*, the descendants of *D*. Merula faced many difficulties, and in his preface he did not claim to be able to perform wonders. The metrical analysis was particularly impenetrable to him, and his edition brims with blatantly flawed line divisions inherited from *D*: colometry was often confused, for example by running subsequent lines into one, even in dialogic scenes in senarii. Another hurdle was the presence of words unfamiliar to

him, both because of archaic morphology and phonetics and on account of the relatively far-fetched and sometimes unpredictable collocations and imagery. The edition, for example, inherited archetypal corruptions simple enough to mend, such as *Poenulus* 669–670 *quo accures magis, / trecentos nummos Philippos portat praesidi* (“just so that you take greater care, he’s carrying three hundred gold coins for security”), for which our medieval manuscripts read *accurre* ... *praesibi*. While the correction *accures* was already in Poggio’s own copy (*Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vaticanus Latinus* 1629), *prae sibi*, which is not acceptable Latin for Plautus, was left untouched. However, the place of Merula in the apparatus of modern Plautus editions is not inconsiderable, because Merula was a more-than-adequate Latinist, even if his documentary basis and the knowledge of early Latin metrics and language were still too primitive at the time to provide much assistance for emendation and interpretation (Ritschl 1868, ii, p. 38).

Not very long after Merula’s edition, Plautus’s fortune in print experienced a very drastic improvement with the 1552 publication of a new edition by Joachim Camerarius of Bamberg, a professor in Leipzig who had had the good fortune of exploiting by far the best and earliest extant manuscript of the Palatine branch, *B*, given to him by a former teacher. How his teacher had obtained a tenth-century manuscript or whence never became known, but it was presumably from a sale of very old manuscripts in the monastery of Freising near Munich. After Camerarius’s death, his heirs bequeathed the manuscript to the court library of the Elector Palatine.

Friedrich Ritschl (1806–1876) was arguably the most important scholar of Plautus’s text of modern times, even though he never completed his plan to edit the entire Plautus corpus and only produced editions of eleven comedies in the years 1849–1854 (*Trinummus*, *Miles Gloriosus*, *Bacchides*, *Stichus*, *Pseudolus*, *Menaechmi*, *Mostellaria*, *Persa*, *Mercator*, *Poenulus*, and *Rudens*; a second edition of only *Trinummus* was published in 1871). Those editions were in themselves a remarkable achievement; even more so were his studies on manuscript tradition, text, language, prosody, and the meters of Plautus (for the most part collected in Ritschl 1866–1879). Ritschl’s groundbreaking and important work left its stamp on all subsequent Plautine scholarship to date. He was also the first to restore the original name of the playwright, *Titus Maccius Plautus*; to all earlier scholars the playwright was known as *Marcus Accius Plautus*, a name derived by comparing the form found in the then-recently-discovered Ambrosian palimpsest with various corrupt forms in *Mercator* and *Asinaria* (Ribbeck 1879–1881, p. 100). Ritschl availed himself of numerous factors that made a significant difference from earlier scholarship. First, he realized that a thorough understanding of early Latin was indispensable for attempting to solve the problems posed by the comedies, and he was in fact among the promoters of the *Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum*, for which he edited a volume of the earliest documents, the *Priscae latinitatis monumenta epigraphica*, in 1862. Ritschl also realized that the study of early Latin glossaries sometimes opened a window onto a vista almost entirely new for the Plautine vocabulary. In this field, too, he himself produced important studies on two glossaries with Plautine words (Ribbeck 1879–1881, pp. 2, 100–110, 430), and he encouraged two of his best students, Georg Goetz and Gustav Loewe, to produce more, which in turn became the *Corpus glossariorum Latinorum* in 7 volumes, published between 1888 and 1923. Ritschl also spent two years in Milan early in his life studying the Ambrosian palimpsest, but equally important was his balanced assessment of the overall value of the

Palatine tradition. It was from reflection on the evidence of the scene titles in *P* (in *A* they were in red ink, which faded completely, leaving blank spaces) that Ritschl discovered the true meaning of the sigla C(ANTICVM) and D(I)V(ERBIVM), which first restored to the *palliata* its nature as a musical drama in which spoken and sung parts alternated.

After Ritschl's death, his editorial work was continued by his pupils Gustav Loewe, Georg Goetz, and Friedrich Schoell (Leipzig, 1871–1894). Plautus was the ground where perhaps all most important Latin textual critics of the nineteenth century tried their mettle: two other fundamental editions were those of Friedrich Leo (Berlin, 1895–1896) and W.M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1903–1905). An important project of a complete new critical edition of the comedies, the *editio Sarsinatis*, is still in progress (2001–). Its main characteristics are the accurate assignment (in the apparatus) of conjectures to Humanist and early modern scholarship and a much more detailed presentation of relevant manuscript readings, including paratextual and colometric information transmitted by the manuscripts, with special attention to the layers of corrections by subsequent hands, especially in manuscripts *B* and *D*.

FURTHER READING

For general assessments of the working and editorial methods of Republican scholarship, see Zetzel (1981). Tarrant (1983) offers the best concise treatment of the principal manuscripts and their relationships. On the “Hadrianic,” or second-century critical edition of the comedies, see Bader (1970). Pasquali (1952) contains a very lucid illustration of the different principles adopted by the late antique scholars responsible for *A* and *Π*. Stockert (2014), using *Cistellaria* as a study case, describes how the late antique palimpsest *A* yielded precious new information through multi-spectral photography and further digital elaboration. Tontini (2002a) examines the reception of the “eight-comedy” Plautus in the late Middle Ages (Petrarch, Boccaccio, the French and Italian pre-Humanists), the discovery and impact of codex *D*, and the textual critical and editorial activities of Quattrocento intellectuals, including the division of plays into acts.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

The Medieval Reception of Plautus's *Aulularia*: *Querolus* and Vitalis Blesensis

Antony Augoustakis

Plautus's reception in the Middle Ages was eclipsed by a more fortunate reception of his successor in Roman comedy, Terence, who seemed to offer materials more promptly relatable to a Christian audience and readership. Plautus's near disappearance from the literary canon of the period can be attributed to several reasons (Molina Sánchez 1998, 2007), but Terence's popularity in school curricula and the moralizing tone of his comedies vanquished the more irreverent style and archaic language of Plautus. Thus, *Amphitruo*, *Asinaria*, *Aulularia*, *Captivi*, *Cistellaria*, *Curculio*, and *Epidicus* were in circulation, while the rest were not until 1429. This chapter will examine the reception and transformations of Plautus's *Aulularia* ("The Pot of Gold"), a notable exception in terms of the reception of Plautine comedies after antiquity, in the anonymous play *Querolus* and in *Aulularia* by Vitalis Blesensis.

Aulularia recounts the fortune of Euclio, a stingy, poor old man, who discovers a pot of gold buried in his house. As the guardian spirit of the house (*Lar Familiaris*) explains in the prologue, the pot of gold was hidden by Euclio's grandfather and is used to test Euclio's reverence toward the gods and to honor Euclio's daughter, who is to be married by the conclusion of the play. Euclio's daughter, Phaedrium, was raped and impregnated during the festival of Ceres by the young man Lyconides, who was drunk at the time but still remembered the identity of the girl. Lyconides's mother, Eunomia, is trying to arrange a marriage for her brother, Megadorus, to a woman closer to his age; Megadorus, in turn, wishes to be married to young Phaedrium. The conflict between Megadorus and Lyconides is resolved when Euclio agrees to allow Lyconides to marry Phaedrium on the condition that he help him find the pot of gold, which in the meantime had been stolen by Lyconides's slave. The slave demands his freedom in return. Unfortunately, the ending of the play is missing except for a few fragments (de Melo 2011; MacLennan and Stockert 2016), but we can safely surmise a happy ending with Lyconides's union with Phaedrium and, perhaps, his slave's emancipation.

Querolus

Aulularia's popularity in terms of its reception and adaptation was already evident in late antiquity, around the fifth century (all dates CE), when an anonymous play was produced under the title *Querolus sive Aulularia* ("The Grumpy" or "The Pot of Gold"). The play's second title comes from the manuscripts, which falsely attributed the comedy to Plautus during the Middle Ages until the first printed edition of the play in 1564. The text is in rhythmical prose, a "halting rhythm" (*clodo pede*, *Prologus* 10; see Jacquemard-Le Saos 1994, pp. l–lv; García Calvo 1998). *Querolus*'s central character is the eponymous hero, Querolus, whose name points to the Latin verb for complaining (*queror*). He has inherited a treasure from his dead father Euclio, and the plot thickens when the parasite Mandrogerus tries to stop Querolus from getting his inheritance. The play comprises a prooemium ("Preface"), a prologus, and 15 scenes for a total of 113 chapters (following the 1994 edition of Jacquemard-Le Saos, p. xxv and n. 25, with discussion of the division of the play into five acts by previous editors). As in the case with Plautus's *Aulularia*, the ending is missing. Even though we do not have precise information about the author of this prose version of *Aulularia*, we know that the dedicatee is the poet Rutilius Namatianus, the author of the late antique poem *De reditu suo* ("On his return," 417). In the prooemium, the anonymous author of the *Querolus* addresses Rutilius as a man to be honored with great praise and claims that the play was produced for discussion and a banquet, presumably at the house of Rutilius (on *Querolus*'s performability, see Jacquemard-Le Saos 1994, pp. xxvi–xxviii; on genre, Vidović 2009, pp. 13–15; on the influence of folktales, Lockwood 1913). As Jacquemard-Le Saos (1994, pp. ix, 105–109) points out, a decree addressed to Rutilius in 412 (*Codex Theodosianus* 6.27.15) is parodied in the sixth scene of the play. In such case, the play could be dated between 414 and 417, preceding the publication of Rutilius's *De reditu* (or 408 and 417, according to Küppers 1979).

Many theories have been advanced about the identity of this anonymous author: is it a subordinate but close friend of Rutilius? Contemporaries such as Palladius, Axius Paulus, Avianus, and Lucillus have been proposed, some less convincingly than others (Jacquemard-Le Saos 1994, pp. xii–xxiv; Vidović 2009, pp. 7–8). Of great importance, regardless of a possible identification of the author with one of Rutilius's associates from Gaul, is that the composer of *Querolus* is a person of many talents and immense learning, as evidenced by the command of Latin literature, from Plautus to Petronius and Juvenal (Küppers 1989; Jacquemard-Le Saos 1994, Appendix 2; on the mélange of language employed, Golvers 1984; Jacquemard-Le Saos 1994, pp. xliii–l; Mantzilas 2014, p. 307). This anonymous author is one who does not simply imitate the Plautine archetype of *Aulularia* and his other models but rather creates a new, original play, "characteristic of the age in which the dramatist lived" (Duckworth 1942, p. 895), much like Plautus had done with his Greek New Comic models. Plautus's creative adaptation of the Greek plays serves the author of the *Querolus* as a mechanism for alteration, expansion, and transformation of the ancient plays to a new form that speaks to the taste and needs of his readership and audience of the period.

In the late antique play, much has changed from Plautus's *Aulularia*. The presence of the *Lar* and Querolus's pedigree from Euclio are retained, along with the central role of the lost and recovered pot of gold. But the themes of the liaison of Phaedrium and Lyconides or Megadorus's and Lyconides's conflict are elided from the *Querolus*; the

slaves are replaced; the topics covered and the messages conveyed are recalibrated toward the philosophical and religious (Mantzilas 2014, pp. 307–308). As the author observes in the prooemium (2), *sermone illo philosophico ex tuo materiam sumpsimus* (“I took my clues from that philosophical discourse of yours”). The author jokingly leaves it up to the audience to recognize the changed materials: *Querolus an Aulularia haec dicatur fabula, vestrum hinc iudicium, vestra erit sententia* (“Whether this play should be called *Querolus* or *Aulularia*, it is your decision, it will be your judgment”). We can therefore summarize the major alterations of the Plautine play in terms of its retention of the original material, the deletion or elision of scenes deemed unnecessary, their replacement by new scenes, and finally a thematic shift toward issues philosophically and morally relevant to the period. As we will see, this adaptation of Plautus's *Aulularia* substantially differs from the original text: the anonymous author of the *Querolus* keeps the threads of the plot (the treasure's loss and recovery) but discards the elements that have become irrelevant for the audience of this fifth-century piece. Obviously tastes change, and the *Querolus*'s tendency to emphasize the moral and philosophical over the erotic proves this point well.

Let us look at some of these alterations in more detail. In the first scene (11–15), the *Lar Familiaris* unravels the threads of the plot for the audience: Euclio, Querolus's father, died before returning home. He was a miser, just like his son, but he had buried an urn holding a treasure years ago, unbeknownst to his son, and used to honor it because it allegedly held the ashes of his father. In the extensive scene that follows (16–41), the Lar appears to Querolus himself, discloses his identity as a god, and engages with him in an altercation about morals and sin: Querolus is made to admit to all the faults of his character; namely, that he is a misanthrope and desires to have things that would only make him more miserable. The Lar instructs Querolus in humility, happiness, and satisfaction (Scene 2, 37):

LAR. Trust the one who tries to trick you and help and assist the one who tries to trap you. If thieves come to you, receive them gladly, same for brigands ...

QUER. Why?

LAR. So that you be rich.

QUER. How?

LAR. If you lose everything you have.

QUER. Why?

LAR. So that you be happy.

This soul-searching leaves Querolus puzzled at the “heavenly apparition” (*res divina ostendetur*), a clear change from the Plautine play not only in terms of the introduction of the divine apparatus but also the acknowledgment of its potency in influencing human affairs.

In Scene 3 (42–46), we encounter Mandrogerus for the first time, the parasite whose name evokes the magical plant, mandragora, but also is etymologically related to *mandra* (“herd of cattle, gaming table”) and *mando* (“eat”), plus the Greek γέρων (“old man”), all suggestive of Mandrogerus's evil machinations (Jacquemard-Le Saos 1994, pp. 75–76). He becomes the parasite par excellence who does not crave food but rather gold (Vidović 2009, pp. 25–31). He is accompanied by the aptly named Sycophanta, a flatterer parasite, and another associate, Sardanapalus, whose name points to the famous Assyrian king. In

Scenes 4 and 5 (47–66), Sardanapallus and Sycophanta feign a dispute between themselves, a clear metatheatrical gesture on the part of the author, to attract Querolus's attention and draw him in to meet the magician Mandrogerus. Since the character of the magician itself is not a Plautine element, the author carefully weaves into the play a meaningful role for Mandrogerus. As the two parasites engage in this set-up dialogue with Mandrogerus about the best kind of worship, Mandrogerus explains that there are three kinds of inferior (*minorum*) gods who should be appeased (52): the powerful planets (*potentes planetae*), the grievous geese (*anseris inportuni*), and the grim Dog-heads (*cynocephali truces*). This theological exposition leads to many comic moments in the scene, as Mandrogerus uses infernal imagery to instill fear of the unknown in Querolus, the intended recipient of the diatribe. For instance, the planets are guarded by harpies, dog-heads, furies, screechows, and night owls (55), and Mandrogerus claims to have seen Cerberus itself (57). Querolus takes the bait and asks how good luck can be worshipped (61), to which Mandrogerus replies that one must worship the *Lares Familiares*. The magician then instructs Querolus on how to purify his ill-fortuned place: a ceremony must be performed inside the shrine, while Querolus is outside; he must provide Mandrogerus and his associates with an empty chest in which the evil spirits will be caught. Querolus sends Pantomalus to find his friend, Arbiter ("Witness"), for assistance. Scene 7 (77–79), when Mandrogerus has completed the purification, exhibits another extensive innovation emphasizing the religious and the ceremonial: "I don't recall any house was ever so purified before" (77). Little does Querolus know that he is carrying in the chest his whole fortune. Mandrogerus instructs him not to leave the house for the next three days, or bad luck should return. The anonymous author of *Querolus* insists on introducing un-Plautine elements that have little relevance to the world of the Plautine original but obviously have great relevance to his own audience. The pagan and the religious blend to create a hybrid world where fantasy and superstition reign supreme.

In Scene 9 (81–82), Pantomalus returns with Arbiter only to find the house in complete silence due to the curfew imposed by Mandrogerus. In following scene (83–89), the three conspirators, having just realized that what they stole was an urn full of ashes, mourn as if at a funeral. Mandrogerus decides to avenge Euclio and his son by sending Sardanapallus to frighten the superstitious Querolus by claiming that he is the misfortune that has returned to haunt him. But this ruse backfires as soon as Querolus calls on his people to come to the door, and the three conspirators flee in fright: Mandrogerus throws the urn from the window inside the house, and Sardanapallus hears the cries of joy from Querolus and the others who have now discovered the gold. He painfully exclaims:

Life was there (in the urn), where we thought death was buried. Wretched we were wrong, but not simply deceived and not once. A transformation (*metamorphosis*) is happening here: we took away ashes, and we threw away gold. (89).

Thus the play emphasizes that this pursuit for gold was ultimately in vain. By pointing to the *metamorphosis* taking place, the playwright underscores this futility as part of a wider theological message, as we see next.

This *metamorphosis* prompts the *Lar Familiaris* in the next scene (90–91) to proclaim that the urn "has given birth, being pregnant with gold, a worthless mother gave birth to

a great child.” This scene alludes to childbirth scenes in Greek and Roman New Comedy, except that this childbirth is metaphorical, part of the shift of themes to the philosophical and religious rather than comic per se, as we have seen above. And this symbolism is quickly followed by a moralistic, religious message (Scene 11, 90): “And all men should now understand that they cannot get a hold of or lose anything unless he favors them who has all power.” This affirmation of the all-powerful being who oversees human fate and fortune is combined with a promise for Mandrogerus’s punishment. In Scene 12 (92–94), Querolus, Arbiter, and Pantomalus come to the stage, and Querolus acknowledges the role of the *Lar* in his fortune (Scene 12, 93): “This is clearly that which the Household God foretold me that all good things would come to me even though I would oppose and fight against it.”

When Mandrogerus returns in Scene 13 (95–109), he hands over to Querolus a letter, allegedly from his father Euclio, which explains that Mandrogerus deserves half of the treasure, “if his trust (*fides*) and labor require it” (96). Querolus interrogates Mandrogerus, who reveals that he threw the urn with the gold though the window, and thus he confesses the crime. True to his name as judge and witness, Arbiter urges Querolus to forgive Mandrogerus: “forgive and let go: this is the true victory” (102). But Mandrogerus committed two crimes, theft and sacrilege: he stole the urn of gold and desecrated the urn of ashes. Arbiter intervenes once again to implore Querolus to take Mandrogerus in his service: he has, after all, an *ingenium lepidissimum* (“a most charming talent,” 107). As preserved, the play’s ending is unsatisfactory after Scene 14, which ends with the unfinished sentence *digna causa* (“a worthy reason,” 110). The manuscripts preserve a lengthy scene after this sentence, called the *Lex convivialis* or *Decretum parasiticum* (“Banquet Law” or “Decree for Slaves”), which editors omit as spurious (Ranstrand 1951) or transfer to Scene 13 (Corsaro 1965). It is best, however, to assume a lacuna after Scene 14 and that the pronouncement of the *Lex* concludes the play (Peiper 1875; Jacquemard-Le Saos 1994, pp. 113–114).

Vitalis Blesensis

Querolus’s adaptation of Plautus’s *Aulularia* in the fifth century served as the model for the *Aulularia* of Vitalis Blesensis (William of Blois), composed c. 1125–1145 (Bertini 1976). Its author was a monastic abbot in Sicily, and earlier he had produced the Latin comedy *Geta*, a free adaptation of Plautus’s *Amphitruo* (c. 1125–1130, according to Bertini 1976). *Geta* was apparently more popular than *Aulularia*, as *Geta* survives in over 60 manuscripts as opposed to the two for *Aulularia* (cf. the assessment of Elliott 1984, p. xxxvii: “[*Aulularia*] lacks *Geta*’s sparkle”). Here we focus on Vitalis’s *Aulularia* in order to trace the development of the Plautine comedy and its reception through the twelfth century. This comedy is in elegiac distichs, a *nova comedia* (Suchomski 1975) – a form preferred by those writing in this genre in the period that combines the classical playwrights with Ovid (Bertini 1979; Crawford 1987; on whether these are elegiac comedies, Latin comic tales, or Latin *fabliaux*, see Elliott 1984, pp. xv–xviii, who emphasizes that these works do not fit “into a single generic pigeon-hole”; cf. Molina Sánchez 2007; Mantzilas 2014).

Vitalis's *Aulularia* is much shorter than *Querolus*, at 792 verses (following Molina Sánchez's 1999 edition). The source of inspiration is *Querolus* itself rather than Plautus's original play (Bianchi 1956), which is not surprising given that *Querolus* was a text studied in the schools of Orleans (Bate 1979a). The twelfth-century condensed version of *Querolus* follows the plot closely but with changes, again reflecting on its time and place in France: there is considerable focus on the physical and astronomical sciences, with satire directed at the school at Chartres (Elliott 1984, pp. xxxviii–xxix). Scholars have debated the performability of this piece, and as with *Querolus*, it is difficult to discern whether or not the play was meant to be staged or simply read (Girard 1931, p. 67 on the impossibility of performing this *Aulularia*; *contra* Bate 1979b and Elliott 1984, pp. xviii–xxvi, who points out that these “comedies were intended to be presented, not merely read,” p. xxvi).

In the prologue, which is characteristically Terentian (Molina Sánchez 2007, pp. 130–131; Mantzilas 2014, p. 310), Vitalis explains his technique:

Maybe whoever rereads Plautus will be startled that I have altered the names of the *personae dramatis* in my writings. There is a reason for having done so: my verses need domesticated words; my meter fears names more grandiose than normal. So I created changed or shortened names that could fit in my verses, while the plot remains the same. Someone could accuse me that my comedy talks about fate and the stars and sings about themes too lofty; they may allege that I deviated and that my pen foolishly escaped towards lofty affairs. But Plautus is to blame. It is not my fault. I follow Plautus and the subject matter requires great things for itself. This comedy, mine or Plautus's, got its name from a pot, but what was formerly Plautus's has now become mine. I shortened Plautus, and this loss should make him happy. Vitalis's writings earn Plautus a good name. My *Amphitruo* before, and now my *Aulularia*, oppressed by age, finally felt Vitalis's aid. (1–28)

Vitalis clearly boasts of his accomplishments (Braun 1985, p. 61): he has made Plautus trendy again (26) by having wrought significant changes on his model, not simply by shortening the names of his characters to fit the meter (Mandrogerus has become Sardana; Sardanapallus has become Gnatho; Bisanti 2007, pp. 97–112, 2009), but, and perhaps most importantly, by introducing such lofty topics as astronomy, theology, and philosophy. Vitalis believes that *Querolus* is Plautus's work, and as such the prologue dignifies the play through the link, allowing Vitalis to claim a place in the literary tradition through his significant changes to the original (a frequent device among the authors of the *nova comedia*; Molina Sánchez 2007, esp. pp. 130–131; Kendrick 2014 on medieval adaptations as rejuvenations).

As pointed out above, in this new genre of elegiac comedy, narrative and dialogue are enmeshed to provide the reader and audience with the necessary information regarding the plot. The first scene (29–130) opens with Querolus blaming the gods for his predicament and his name: Querolus denotes a miser, a misanthrope; why could he not have been named Plato, Socrates, or Pythagoras instead (64)? Then Querolus states that he likes Plato's doctrine about the nonexistence of gods (83). In a direct reversal of *Querolus* (and, in turn, of Plautus's *Aulularia*), Querolus now directs his attacks against the worship of the *Lar*, who along with the protagonist has no use for him (91–100). The only god recognized by Querolus is the one who feeds him most (104). Molina Sánchez (2007, pp. 130–131) observes that here Vitalis exploits *Querolus* and its message regarding fate, divine

order, and Christianity, but ultimately subverts the fifth-century play, according to the spirit of the twelfth century: Vitalis attacks the teachings of the *magistri* at the various schools in France regarding Neoplatonic fate and the demiurge as a precursor to Christianity. As we have seen in the case of *Querolus*, the thematic shift becomes important in order to convey the playwright's message. Vitalis satirizes aspects of his society by changing the themes he wishes to focus on in this retelling of the classic story of the pot of gold.

Such a thematic change can be seen in the next scene (131–184), where the Lar tries to enlighten the protagonist regarding the order of the world, fate, and human nature. The god proclaims that Jupiter commands things to happen according to a preordained order (157–164): *ordinis est ordo* (“there is an order to order”), and this divine order blesses everything, allowing no place for the miserable (*sicque implicat ordo beatus, /Cuncta beans, misero quod locus omnis abest*, 163–64).

The following scene (185–284) is a flashback in time: Euclio discloses to his slave Sardana the secret about the pot of gold that he bequeaths to his son through Sardana, with the provision that the slave be the messenger of good news to Querolus and obtain his freedom after this (and a new name, Paul). But the cunning slave, emboldened by the disclosure of the secret, leaves the funeral of his master in haste in order to mobilize his plan to steal the money from Querolus by digging up the pot of gold from the altar of the Lar, and to appropriate it by claiming that he is Paul, the heir of a Roman consul.

Sardana returns home after seven days and, in the next scene (285–382), he meets his associates, Gnatho and Clinia, to organize the plan to deceive Querolus. This is a different Sardana: he now believes he is Paul; he prefers Latin to Greek (301); he is puffed up by the stroke of good luck. He wants to pass as a magician and rob Querolus of the pot of gold from his house. As Gnatho says to Sardana: *Sit persona magi, Romani lingua, potentis / Vultus, phylosophi sermo, studentis opus* (“let your character be a magician, your language Latin, your face of a powerful man, your speech of a philosopher, your work of a scholar,” 353–354). The plan is set in motion by Gnatho and Clinia (383–564), while Querolus is eavesdropping. Gnatho elaborately praises the skills of Paul, the magician, a new Aristotle and Plato, but a Roman one, who knows the future better than Jupiter himself! As we saw in *Querolus*, Vitalis blends in his play the pagan with the Christian, creating a hybrid world wherein elements from all periods can coexist. Clinia engages in a dialogue with Gnatho, knowing that Querolus is paying close attention to what they say. In the next scene (565–674), Gnatho and Clinia take Querolus to the house where Sardana is staying: there Sardana impresses Querolus by guessing all his personal information. He proclaims that Querolus's problem is none other than the Lar, whose altar is cursed and whose ground is ill-omened. But Sardana has the solution: he will cleanse the ground (“I control the stars and I repudiate fate with my spells: all will rejoice exorcised by my skill,” 599–600). After a mock religious rite of cleansing and exorcism to drive away ill fate, an innovative element introduced to poke fun at religious practices in a world that has become all the more enlightened, the slaves dig the pot out from the ground, and Sardana orders Querolus to have an empty chest ready to go. Finally, Sardana instructs Querolus to stay at his home, with doors and windows shut.

But as the cunning slaves run away and reach a forest (675–732), they realize the pot of gold is nothing but a funerary urn, holding the ashes of Tripericius, a man from the times of Julius Caesar. There is nothing left to them but return and throw the urn back into the house of Querolus.

In the penultimate scene (733–772), the slave Pantolabus discovers the pot of gold, now thrown back into the house. Sardana, who has been looking through the cracks, realizes the deceit: the gold was hiding in the pot. Querolus recognizes the slave Sardana, who is no longer in the garb of Paul; Sardana tries to ingratiate himself to the master by saying that through fraud he has proved his faith (*sic in commissa est fraude probata fides*, 772).

In the final scene (773–792), the Arbiter acknowledges that Sardana is trustworthy: *fides est tua digna fide* (“your loyalty is worthy of trust,” 790). Vitalis then ends his work with Querolus giving Sardana his part of the treasure: *Fert lucra ficta fides; lis cadit, acta placent* (“false trust brings profit; the quarrel is dropped, the action is pleasing,” 792).

In his rendition of the *Aulularia* through *Querolus*, Vitalis removes any depth from the presence of a divine plan and broadens the role of the prehistory of his work. He shortens the plot to get to the end faster and gives up the unity of the place for dramatic purposes (Braun 1985, p. 70). Vitalis, however, distances himself from both *Querolus* and Plautus intentionally and consciously, adapting his play to the climate and trends of his own time period (Mantzilas 2014, p. 310), emphasizing those themes that can speak to his readers and audience while discarding others as irrelevant.

As we saw in our examination of the medieval reception of Plautus’s *Aulularia*, there is no doubt that each author working with the archaic Latin materials strives to outdo the models of the Roman past and adapt the play to the demands of the time, whether in late antiquity, as the anonymous author of *Querolus* does, or as Vitalis does several centuries later in France (Molina Sánchez 1999, p. 38: “Vitalis as *poeta de su tiempo*”).

FURTHER READING

Further and detailed bibliography on *Querolus* can be found in Lana (1985) and Lassandro and Romano (1991). On the presence of rhetoric and the construction of dialogues in *Querolus*, see Gómez (2017). Translations of the *Aulularia* by Vitalis of Blois are to be found in Cohen (1931) (French) and Suchomski and Willumat (1979) (German). For the reception of the *Aulularia* in Germany in the eponymous work of Johannes Burmeister (1629), see the edition by Fontaine (2015).

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CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

From Ferrara to Venice: Plautus in Vernacular and Early Italian Comedy (1486–1530)

Gianni Guastella

Ercole d'Este's Project

The performance of *Menechini* (a vernacular version of Plautus's *Menaechmi*) that Ercole I d'Este staged in Ferrara on 25 January 1486, in the courtyard of the ducal palace, was a momentous event that signaled the return to the stage of the Plautine comedies after more than a millennium.¹ It was soon described as an authentic resurrection of ancient theater. In contrast to what was happening in Rome and Florence, this was not a performance by a small scholastic or academic community, but a festive event fully integrated into court life for a broad and diverse public. In fact, it represented the height of festivities in honor of Francesco Gonzaga, the future spouse of Ercole's daughter, Isabella.

This chapter focuses on the decades during which Plautine shows and vernacularizations enjoyed substantial success in northern Italy. Through an analysis of the new staging and physical setting of the plays, the actual performances, and the production of texts (manuscript and printed) that were circulated during that short season, I will try to give a general idea of the role that Plautus's comedies played in the rapid evolution of a new dramatic and literary genre. In fact, the performance of Plautine comedies in vernacular inspired some sixteenth-century Italian playwrights, including Ariosto, Bibbiena, and Machiavelli, to compose original plays that deliberately competed with Plautus. These were among the first exemplars of what we now call modern European comedy.

The performance organized by Ercole d'Este was not yet “theater” in the modern sense of the term, but just one of many festive court events of the time (tournaments, jousts, *sacre rappresentazioni*, mythological plays, etc.). A space reserved for shows specifically conceived for the “stage” did not yet exist, but had to be constructed every time in courtly palaces or public spaces where different kinds of shows could be presented to a wider audience. Moreover, the structure of the stage on which comedies were performed could not

really be modeled on ancient shows, since knowledge of the main kinds of ancient theater was confused and vague. Nonetheless, in a typically humanistic way, Battista Guarini, who taught Rhetoric at the Studio in Ferrara, viewed Ercole's undertaking as a direct revival of ancient theater.

The *Menechini* festival was just the first of a substantial series of experimental shows promoted by the Duke of Ferrara that continued at least until his death on 25 January 1505. This original initiative began a consistent emulative trend in the Po Valley courts, particularly in Mantua, where we know various analogous stagings were organized (D'Ancona 1891, II, pp. 368–398). These early Plautine vernacularizations experienced their last successful season in Venice, a city where theatrical life underwent an extraordinary development during the first half of the sixteenth century. Unlike Ferrara or Mantua, ruled by powerful princes on whose artistic patronage theater depended almost entirely, Venice was a republic where theatrical activities were being promoted by several competing companies. The shows they organized were not strictly controlled by a central authority and took place in various private venues, such as the palaces of Venetian nobility or rooms annexed to religious buildings. Even in this lively theatrical environment, the comedies of Plautus, in the same vernacular forms that had already been adopted in Ferrara, enjoyed substantial success for almost two decades, between 1507 and 1526. A trace of this success was even preserved in print, thanks to a few editions of Plautine comedies that possibly reproduced some of the texts staged during this period.

The New Performative Context

In the city of Ferrara, the series of Plautine shows can be subdivided into two periods separated by a long pause (Coppo 1968; Falletti in Cruciani et al. 1994, pp. 131–167). In the first phase, *Menaechmi* was followed by a performance of *Amphitruo* (1487), which, culminating with the birth of Hercules, lent itself particularly well to implicitly celebrating the Duke of Ferrara. Three years later, on 10 February 1490, another Plautine comedy seems to have been staged (possibly *Curculio*). *Menaechmi* and *Amphitruo* were both shown again to the court public in February 1491 during the celebrations following the marriage of Ercole's son, Alfonso, to Anna Maria Sforza, which sealed the alliance between Ferrara and Milan. On another important festive occasion organized to celebrate this alliance in August 1493, Ercole had three other comedies staged in Pavia (*Captivi*, *Mercator*, and *Poenulus*).

But just when the Ferrarese shows seemed to be flourishing, the Plautine performances experienced an interruption of five years, due to a series of losses in Ercole's family and political and financial difficulties. As of February 1499, a new five-year stretch of shows began, expanding to include almost all the Plautine titles, along with some Terentian ones (Arbizzoni 1994, pp. 279–280). Apparently, only 5 of Plautus's 20 complete comedies were never staged (*Cistellaria*, *Persa*, *Rudens*, *Stichus*, and *Truculentus*). During this second phase, the most successful comedy was Terence's *Eunuchus*, performed at least six times between 1499 and 1503. When Alfonso ascended the ducal throne in 1505, the preferences of the Ferrarese public seemed to incline toward more innovative forms of shows. Vernacularizations of Plautus (and Terence) became rarer, while the production of

new comedies was increasingly preferred. With the performance of Ludovico Ariosto's *Cassaria* on 6 March 1508, the most important Ferrarese writer of the time had done more than simply rework an ancient drama in the vernacular: while drawing on the plots of the Roman comedy writers, Ariosto was finally producing original comic plays.

These plays, performed in a verse translation and staged for the new courtly setting, clearly had little in common with ancient theater practice. Here I will address just a few major points. For example, the very meaning of the Greek background, which characterized the *palliata*, was transformed in the new Ferrarese context, creating an entirely different atmosphere from the one that would have been staged before Roman spectators. The setting of the episodes was transformed into a generic urban location with characteristics that resembled those of a contemporary Italian town. At the base of the raised platform where the action unfolded, the spectators saw the image of the walls of a fortified city, and a group of houses in the modern style was visible at the center of the scene (Elena Povoledo in Pirrotta 1982, pp. 301–307; Zorzi 1977, pp. 5–59). Acting techniques also differed substantially from those of Greek and Roman practice. The Ferrarese actors did not use masks as the ancients did, and therefore had no cover under which they could take turns playing the same characters. It seems that in Ferrara each actor was associated with just one of the figures appearing on stage, and therefore a great number of people were needed to put on such performances (Cruciani 1982, p. 464; Pirrotta 1982, p. 49). The performers were not experts in properly theatrical practice, as a tradition of this kind of show did not yet exist, and the acting profession would not begin to be firmly developed until a century later. Diverse groups of nonprofessional performers appeared on the Ferrarese stage. For example, the first performance of *Amphitruo* in 1487 featured a group of young poets close to the court: Antonio Tebaldeo (at 24) played the part of Amphitruo; Nicolò Tossico that of Alcmene; Giovanni Pencaro, Mercury; Geronimo del Brutura, Sosia; and Francesco de' Bonomelli, Jupiter. We also know the names of other people employed during the Pavesian performances of 1493 from a letter Ercole sent to his son-in-law Francesco Gonzaga: Battista Stabellino, known as “Pignatta” (“The Pot”), Gian Maria Scarlattini, and the otherwise unknown Zaccagnino and Francesco Ruino. The information that we have about Pignatta and Scarlattini implies that they were well-educated individuals who had close relationships with the marquise Isabella and with Matteo Maria Boiardo, respectively (Cruciani 1982, pp. 463–464; on Scarlattini, Pieri 2012, pp. 60–61; on Pignatta, Cruciani 1982, pp. 459–460; Canova 2013).

We know nothing specific about how these figures performed the vernacularized text of Plautus, but information furnished by contemporary witnesses allows us to hypothesize about their technique. For example, the Ferrarese diarist Ugo Caleffini described the first performance of *Menechini* as follows:

In the courtyard of the Duke's palace the story of Menaechmus and his twin brother, who appear in Plautus's comedy, was staged with the ship, the town, and in general all that is mentioned in it, word for word. And the actors, in costume, pronounced all the rhyming lines of the comedy, singing. (Coppo 1968, p. 44)

According to Caleffini, the “faithful” rendering of Plautus's text in the vernacular was presented to the spectators in poetic form and through singing. It is not easy to establish

exactly what kind of music was involved, but it was certainly entirely different from the sung parts of Plautine dramas. In fact, in the majority of the vernacular translations that we know, a single meter is used for the whole text, thereby erasing the alternation of *cantica* and *deuerbia* typical of the Plautine originals. The “singing” was therefore not used to reproduce the long lyric sections of the *cantica* or the “recitatives” of the parts in trochaic septenarii, but was probably extended across the entire text being performed. What could its role have been?

To answer this question, we can examine a passage of *Menechini*, whose text has reached us through three manuscripts and two printed editions and could at least partially reflect what was recited during the Ferrarese show of 1486. The text of the prologue is assigned to Calliopius (*Callio pio annunciatore*), the Terentian figure who had by then become a symbol of the ancient comic prologue. His first words are:

Human spectators, I wish you and myself happiness and good health. With my tongue and my loud words, and not in my hands, I bring you Plautus. I will show you his immense virtue, which was already well known to the Romans. So, all of you, pay attention, lending me your eyes, your ears, your mind. (Tissoni Benvenuti and Mussini Sacchi 1983, p. 88)

Which renders lines 1–6 of Plautus’s *Menaechmi*:

*Salutem primum iam a principio propitiam
mibi atque uobis, spectatores, nuntio.
Adporto uobis Plautum – lingua non manu,
quaeso ut benignis accipiatis auribus.
Nunc argumentum accipite atque animum aduortite;
quam potero in uerba conferam paucissima.*

Both the figure to whom these lines are entrusted and the poetic form of the text (ottava rima) recall other plays of the time: for example, the *annunci della festa* that characterized the opening of the Florentine *sacre rappresentazioni*, typically pronounced by the figure of the heavenly messenger, the angel. The prologue-speaker invites the spectators to engage their sight, hearing, and attention in order to enjoy the show, and, while describing how he will present Plautus’s text, says that he will use loud words (*parole accute*).

This expression can be compared to Caleffini’s mention of the singing (*in canto*, Ventrone 2016, pp. 154–157). The use of these terms in the description of the performance proposed by the Ferrarese “actors” to their audience is explained rather well in light of the research that Elena Abramov-van Rijk (2009) recently dedicated to the technique of *parlar cantando*, or “speaking through singing.” Since the fourteenth century, this had been a way of reciting poetry employed by professional performers: not only heralds, minstrels, and jesters, but also authors of lyric or chivalric poetry, in particular those able to improvise with the accompaniment of musical instruments, such as the arm lyre. This consisted of a recitation characterized by a special sonority (“loud words”) on the one hand and by simple musical modulation of the lines (the “singing” that Caleffini speaks of) on the other, probably of a repetitive nature.

As a consolidated practice for “theatrical” performance did not yet exist, it is no wonder that people endowed with such skills were chosen to perform these ancient texts before an

audience on festive occasions. These performers were capable of mastering their own voices and memories and, when needed, making up for the failures of the latter through improvisation on a recurring metrical and musical framework. They were entrusted with the management of a text that consisted entirely of monologues and dialogues in verse, which followed each other according to the interweaving of rhymes imposed by the closed ottava forms or by the continuous concatenation of the terzinas. These are the very metric structures preferred by vernacular translators of Plautus. And it is no coincidence that they are also the ones used most widely by the improvisers we know of from this historical period.

In these vernacularized comedies, as in their originals, a chorus was not present, but *intermedii* were inserted between the acts in many of them. These *intermedii*, recorded in Ferrara since 1487 (Pirrotta 1982, pp. 46–75; Lipani 2014), played a fundamental role in the history of modern comedy. The various witnesses of these shows devote much more attention to their characters and events (mock-heroic combats between monsters or mad-men; work in the fields; dances by nymphs and pastoral figures; etc.) than to the plots of the actual comedy.

Of the 12 comic vernacularizations whose texts have reached us (9 Plautine: *Amph.*, *Asin.*, *Cas.*, *Men.*, *Miles*, *Most.*, *Poen.*, *Pseud.*, *Stich.*; 3 Terentian: *Andr.*, *Eun.*, *Phorm.*), a good 9 are in terza rima. The text of *Menechini* presents us with a complex alternating pattern of ottava and terza rima, with a marked prevalence of the latter. The two exceptions are the vernacularizations of *Poenulus* (in prose) and *Stichus* (with an entirely unique metric structure). The choice of the terzina in the composition of the Plautine and Terentian vernacularizations was probably due to the intent to place these texts within the comic genre.

However, it is necessary to specify further what was meant by the “comic genre” during this historical period. For those who composed the texts we are discussing, the reference point could not have been the *comœdia* practiced by Greek and Roman playwrights. Both in the medieval period and in the era under examination, all memory of the way in which the ancients had practiced theater was long lost, and there was only a very vague idea of what comedy meant to authors like Plautus and Terence. This idea was founded only on the little information that the grammatical tradition of Late Antiquity had passed down to later eras. At the risk of oversimplification, we might say that the following characteristics were deemed typical of comedy:

1. The only speakers are the characters who have monologues or dialogues with each other; a narrative voice never appears;
2. Events involving common people, and not great figures of the past (mythical or historical), are typically depicted;
3. The linguistic style is “low” and near that of everyday conversation;
4. A sad beginning leads to a happy ending.

(Guastella 2007, pp. 71–82; Vescovo 2014, pp. 107–112)

Such a generic way of defining comedy would have included works as different as Dante’s *Comedy* and Boccaccio’s *Comedy of the Florentine Nymphs*, which nonetheless do not fulfill all the requirements listed above. Plautus’s plays were associated with this complex and

diverse tradition, and the metric form most suited to the humble character of their “realistic” style was also imposed on them, since *terzinas* were generally used for “true” narrations, and *ottavas* for fictional and fantastical stories.

The actors involved in the performance of these texts may have sung using, in the manner of the improvisers, recursive melodic frameworks that covered the entire arc of the *terzina* (or *ottava*). The lines were distributed in such a way that each performer was generally entrusted with the execution of entire metric units. And, in fact, in the vernacularizations that we are discussing, each line contained at least one complete *terzina* (Arbizzoni 1994, p. 278; Ventrone 2008, pp. 165–176; in the vernacularization of *Menechini*, the rule is applied both to *terzinas* and *ottavas*).

A similar formal constraint has obvious consequences on the structure of the text, which inevitably became much longer than the original. Clear examples of this can be observed in the translation of exchanges like the one between Mercury and Amphitruo in *Amphitruo* at lines 1020–1021:

- MER. *Quis ad fores est?*
 AMPH. *Ego sum.x*
 MER. *Quid “ego sum”?*
 AMPH. *Ita loquor.*
 MER. *Tibi Iuppiter dique omnes irati certo sunt qui sic frangas fores.*
- MER. Who’s at the door?
 AMPH. It’s me.
 MER. “It’s me”?
 AMPH. That’s what I said.
 MER. Jupiter and all the gods are surely angry at you for breaking down the door like that.

In the translation into the vernacular by Pandolfo Collenuccio, the five exchanges that constitute only two lines of trochaic septenarii in Plautus take up a good six *terzinas*:

- MER. *Chi è che batte a l’uscio, il par ch’io senta*
Un ton venir qua su nel capo mio
Tanto romor a l’uscio s’appresenta.
 AMPH. *Apri non vidi tu guarda son io;*
El par che de sta cosa sii insiente
Pur conoscer dovresti il parlar mio.
 MER. *Che vuol dir io son io uom da niente*
Che meni con tue cianze tal rumore;
Io son io, el tuo parlar val niente.

- AMPH. ***Sì, te dico, tu me fai star de fore***
A modo de schernito hor vien aprire
Né mi dar per tua fe' pena maggiore.
- MER. ***Ben certamente a questo tuo fallire***
Debbono esser con Giove gli altri dei
Teco turbati insieme al tuo venire.
Poi che tu vieni con questi pensier rei
Per romper lo nostro uscio over la porta
Va col. malanno ch'io non scio che sei.
 (Zoppino edition, Venice, 1530, cc. 43 r-v)

I have marked the segments of text that contain the actual translation of the two Plautine lines in bold: the rest is filler, as every stage line had to expand to fit the *terzina* form. In the past, commentators simply mocked the wordiness of this solution, but it might be better to posit a likely reason behind such a binding choice. In such cases as the one quoted above, each of the two actors involved in the dialogue used the middle line of his own metrical unit to propose a rhyme to the other speaker, who used it to finish the first line of his own *terzina* (*mio/son io*; *ins(c)iente/niente*; and so on). This process was probably supported by the recursive melodic modules of the sung recitation, which, among other things, inevitably slowed down the performance.

Considered within the context of a performance, we can see a mechanism of this kind as a framework that provided solid anchors to whoever had to recall the lines to be recited; as a dynamic process suitable for genuine improvisation by the speakers, who took turns completing the rhymes; or as a combination of the two. In order to reconstruct how the actors interacted during the Ferrarese performances, however, we would need to know what kind of texts they were working with before going on stage, a subject about which we unfortunately have very little information.

Scripts and Texts

Studies of these Ferrarese performances observe that almost all the Plautine vernacularizations that have reached us are texts very close to what was actually staged in Ercole d'Este's court, if not real transcripts. These would have been exported to Venice between 1507 and 1508 by an actor from Lucca: Francesco de' Nobili, called Cherea. Just a few years later, between 1512 and 1532, part of these texts would have finally been reproduced there, in the only manuscript and the few printed editions that have been handed down to us.

This reconstruction of events is based on a series of hypotheses without a solid documentary basis, and could be revised using a more careful evaluation of the data in our possession. We do not know what was actually performed on the Ferrarese stages. In fact, we have good reason to think that the texts used during the preparatory phases of the performances were often lost, and sometimes more than one translation into the vernacular was produced of the same comedy. Although we are aware of several episodes that led to the production of different vernacular versions of the Plautine comedies,

almost nothing has reached us of the many texts that must have been produced during the preparation for and after the staging of the Ferrarese plays.

To have at least an approximate idea of the way in which the vernacularizations destined for performance were prepared and then used by actors, we can gather some useful information from some documents of the time. In the draft of a letter dated 6 February 1496, Ercole d'Este explained to Francesco Gonzaga that he was unable to provide him with the text of the comedies of which he had requested copies:

When we staged these comedies, each of the individuals who had to participate in the performance was given his part, so that he could learn his lines by heart. After the comedies were staged, we thought neither of gathering these parts together nor of copying them. To collect them now would almost be impossible, since one of the participants in those comedies is in France (Francesco Ruino), one in Naples (Pignatta), and two in Modena and Reggio (Zaccagnini and Gianmaria Scarlattini). Therefore, you will excuse me if I do not send them to you. (Modena, State Archive, Fondo Cancelleria Ducale, Carteggio Principi Estensi, cassetta 1501/12, mazzo XI, c. 38, my translation).

Ercole added that he would have prepared another text of those same comedies to perform them again for his daughter Isabella, who was visiting Ferrara, but that the project was called off with her departure. Ercole explains that he would have made this new text by reintegrating the missing parts from the vernacular prose version of the comedies that he kept in the ducal library.²

We cannot treat this datum as if it were common practice in the preparation of all Ferrarese plays. But it is certainly useful to be able to examine a concrete example. Each performer, it seems, had an "actor's part" that he carried with him and learned. We do not know exactly what these parts contained or how they were connected to each other. We can imagine that only one composite reference script existed – in verse, prepared, in light of the single performance, from one prose text – and that this script consisted of the various parts given to individual players. A unified text could have been reconstructed only in retrospect by gathering all these parts together. But in the case mentioned this did not happen, and some of them went missing.³

We know nothing of the relationship that existed between the text the actors learned and the one actually performed. In particular, we have no information about the role of improvisation during the performance. We cannot dismiss the idea that the actors invented impromptu variations of their parts, for example, when their memories wavered. But it would be no wonder if large sections of the Plautine comedies were also improvised, especially considering that more than one of the actors we know of were skilled improvisers (young Tebaldeo, to begin with).

In the vernacularizations that have reached us (assuming that these truly had some connection to what was staged in Ferrara), we can see at most a partial reflection of what was shown to the public. It would be reasonable to consider the versions we possess as the result of editorial initiatives carried out to allow their conservation and circulation as texts in a complete literary form, separate from the production of the actual play. Their layout, very similar to the layout in contemporary editions of both Greek and Latin comedies and modern comedies by authors like Ariosto, Bibbiena, and Aretino, also suggests this. For

example, in these editions the paratext is reduced to scant scene headings that only indicate the names of the characters present in individual scenes and exchanges of dialogue. Everything suggests a presentation of a text designed to be read, without a specific “theatrical” contextualization (Andrews 1991, pp. 80–84; Riccò 2008, pp. 15–91; Ventrone 2008, pp. 176, 229–231).

From Ancient Masks to Those of *Commedia dell’Arte*

On a literary level, writing “comedy” in terza rima meant, in the last part of the fifteenth century, using points of reference far removed from the universe of archaic Latin theater, whose dramatic production was founded on an interplay of the Greek world of the Attic originals and the Roman world of their reworkings. The intertextual system that included the Plautine translations performed in Ferrara was entirely vernacular, and its greatest examples were to be found in texts that did not even belong to a theatrical and performative dimension. The most authoritative poetic examples include Dante’s *Comedy*, Boccaccio’s *Amorosa visione*, and Petrarch’s *Trionfi*.

In the new linguistic, theatrical, and literary guise that the Plautine comedies assumed during this phase, the very structure on which the construction of the *palliata* plots was based also experienced a radical shift. The events staged in the ancient *palliatae* revolved around a limited number of fixed roles, which corresponded to specific masks worn by the actors: *adulescentes* and *virgines*, *senes* and *anus*, *servi* and *ancillae*, *parasiti*, *lenae* and *lenones*, *meretrices*, and *milites gloriosi* (Wiles 1991, pp. 68–149). In the vernacular versions of these comedies, which attempted to present the Ferrarese public with an exemplary representation of daily life, similar characters, now detached from ancient costumes and masks, made up a less standardized ensemble of human types and were shown in typically modern urban contexts.

Consequently, when production of original texts began (starting with Ariosto’s *Cassaria* in 1508), the construction of plots was still based around the traditional figures that had characterized ancient comedy, but the repertoire of set characters typical of the *palliata* was enriched by new human types, like the pedant, the unsatisfied wife, the simpleton, the lustful friar, or the amorous old man, sometimes directly inspired by the major Italian novellas. Role-switching and disguises, the tricks pranksters play on foolish and conceited people, the circumstances lovers must face in order to overcome the obstacles obstructing their desire, and adultery (a topic unworkable on the stage of the *palliata*) all became favorite themes. Authors of the so-called *commedia erudita*, like Ludovico Ariosto, Bernardo Dovizi, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Pietro Aretino, found it natural to insert characters and situations typical of fourteenth-century novellas into their plots. Later, the wide repertoire of masks in *commedia dell’arte* was also based on this diverse ensemble of events and types. While the ancient ones were anchored in a rather limited number of roles, modern masks subdivided these and other roles to form a different range of identities characterized by specific traits, sometimes typically regional. Suffice it to think of the variety of servant types (Brighella, Pedrolino, Arlecchino, Pulcinella, etc.) or bullying soldiers (Capitan Spaventa, Capitan Matamoros, Capitan Cardone, etc.).

Vernacular Plautus in Venice

As I said before, it was in Venice that the Plautine performances, at least from 1507 on, experienced a new development. The first to propose Plautine plays there seems to have been Francesco de' Nobili, who received the nickname Cherea after interpreting the character of the same name in Terence's *Eunuchus*, probably in Ferrara during the carnival of 1499 or 1503. He can be considered the first example of a professional actor who, as his contemporary Marino Sanudo confirms, earned money staging his plays in rooms where a paying audience was admitted. Cherea became part of a performative context that was very different from the courtly settings with which he was familiar. In Venice, the "theatrical" shows took place in private settings, like aristocratic palazzi or rooms annexed to religious buildings, which were expressly fitted out to host this kind of performance. Associations of young noblemen (the *compagnie della calza*) generally organized these Venetian performances. Cherea seems to be the first to have popularized the comic vernacularizations of Plautus that had previously enjoyed such success in the courts of the Po Valley (Guarino 1995, pp. 151–167). Between 1507 and 1508 Cherea successfully introduced various plays to the Venetian public, including two Plautine titles: *Menechini* and *Asinaria*. On the wave of this success, at the end of 1508 Cherea went so far as to request the Venetian senate for a lodge in Rialto for his plays, in addition to the printing patent for a wide range of theatrical texts, including a good 15 of the 20 Plautine titles. *Cistellaria*, *Epidicus*, *Poenulus*, *Rudens* and, curiously, even *Asinaria*, which Cherea had performed that same year, were left out. Of the six Terentian comedies, only *Eunuchus* was mentioned. This was the first occasion on which we find evidence of a possible circulation of Plautine vernacularizations in print, for a wider audience of readers. It is no coincidence that this happened in a city where, in the following years, a successful book market experienced an extraordinary growth.

The patent that Cherea had requested was granted, but the authorization to use a public space was not. On the contrary, at the end of December that same year, the Council of Ten forbade the performance in Venetian territory of "comedies, tragedies, and eclogues." In particular, the Ten wanted to put a stop to the staging of comedies, which had been "introduced a very short time ago" and were filled with "obscene, lecherous, and infamous words and deeds." It is certainly no coincidence that, in line with the issue of that ban, Cherea scaled back his theatrical activity in Venetian territory. The Luccan actor did not even take advantage of the printing patent he had been given. Between 1514 and 1521 he moved his activity to the pontifical court of Leo X, and only in the 1520s did Cherea return to the Venetian stage. But notably, the only one of his Plautine performances that we know of – *Menechini* in February 1526 – seems to have been a failure.

Despite repeated bans by Venetian authorities after 1508, theatrical life in the Floating City continued with remarkable vitality, and there was still space within it for the comedies of Plautus and Terence, most often staged by companies of young nobles. At this time Venetian printers began to produce some of the texts for which Cherea had requested a printing patent in 1508. Interest in plays and texts was also documented by figures like Marino Sanudo, who copied five of them (*Asinaria*, *Menechini*, *Sticho*, *Pseudolo*, and *Miles Gloriosus*), probably between 1512 and 1515, into three of the four different quires that make up the Venice manuscript, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, It. IX 368 (7170). At the

beginning of *Pseudolo* and *Miles*, Sanudo mentions the Venetian performances of the two plays, the first one produced by the “Immortals” company in February 1513, the second by a group of young nobles in February 1515 (Padoan 1982, pp. 48–49, nn. 20–21, and 57–58).

All printed editions to which we owe our knowledge of Plautine vernacularizations were produced in Venice itself. They mainly fall between 1526 and 1532, right when the theatrical fortune of these plays in vernacular had been exhausted. The six printed Plautine vernacularizations that we possess (*Amphitrione*, *Asinaria*, *Cassina*, *Menechini*, *Mustellaria*, and *Penolo*) were published (or republished) in Venice in 1530 by Niccolò di Aristotele, called Zoppino, from Ferrara. These made up a sort of small series, unique in the print production of the time (Severi 2009, pp. 350–351).

Zoppino was a singular figure: a *cantimbanco*, or street singer; bookseller; and prolific printer who aimed to promote vernacular literary production on the book market, often transforming what had been extemporaneous performances into printed song books. His rich catalog mainly focused on courtly poetry and literature in the vernacular (including the vernacularizations of Greek and Latin texts), which had had one of its main centers of production in Ferrara (Severi 2009, pp. 46–68; Baldacchini 2011, pp. 8–43; Rospocher 2014). During the last phase of his activity, Zoppino also focused on theatrical literature, publishing some of the major comedies from the years before and favoring Ferrarese productions (Ariosto’s in particular). The six Plautine vernacularizations published in 1530 were also included in this project. Zoppino reprinted three editions produced in Venice in the immediately preceding years (*Menechini*, *Asinaria*, and *Penolo*),⁴ adding three more texts to them that were certainly of Ferrarese origin. These are the only cases for which we also know the names of the translators: Pandolfo Collenuccio for the *Amphitrione* and Girolamo Berardo for *Cassina* and *Mustellaria*.

Without Zoppino’s versions, printed editions of Plautus would only consist of the *Menechini*, *Asinaria*, and *Penolo*, respectively: a fifteenth-century vernacularization probably of Ferrarese origin; a comedy that enjoyed some success in Venice in the early sixteenth century; and a text that may not have been performed. We owe to Zoppino the recovery of *Amphitrione*, *Cassina*, and *Mustellaria*, probably in Ferrara. To this meager selection of six printed comedies we can add *Sticho*, *Pseudolo*, and *Miles Gloriosus*, copied in Sanudo’s manuscript. None of these examples seems remotely to resemble an actual script: instead, they are texts designed for reading, which only in one case (*Asinaria*) preserve the memory of a Venetian performance. Of all the copies produced on the occasion of the Plautine performances in Ferrara, all that remains are a few pale traces of the *Menechini* (Tissoni Benvenuti in Tissoni Benvenuti and Mussini Sacchi 1983, pp. 79–80). Apparently nothing has been preserved of the rich selection of texts that Cherea had put together (or planned to assemble) during his initial success in Venice.

The fact that Zoppino had made these editions part of an editorial project that aimed to create a canon of theatrical texts is certainly significant. Other publishers do not seem to have ever paid particular attention to the production of the vernacular Plautine texts that originated with the Ferrarese shows; Zoppino, however, placed them alongside those by Ariosto, Bibbiena, and Machiavelli, almost as if they complemented each other. The texts that had played a fundamental role in the development of several forms of sixteenth-century comedy were thereby integrated into a small modern theatrical canon that had its apex in Ariosto’s work (Severi 2009, p. 351).

Zoppino's series of texts was produced when the Venetian public considered the Plautine plays to be "a dead thing," as Giovanni Manenti said of the *Menechini* staged by Cherea in a letter to Machiavelli (28 February 1526) about the success of the Venetian performance of the *Mandragola* (Padoan 1982, pp. 83–84). This short "series" also marked the end of the brief period during which these translations into the vernacular remained in the book market. After 1530, they were apparently forgotten, while the prose vernacularizations of all the Terentian comedies began to be printed (Venice, Bernardino Vidale, July 1533). Not until the arrival on the Venetian publishing scene of Gabriele Giolito de' Ferrari did authors like Lodovico Dolce begin to revisit the Plautine comedies by translating and reworking them. Dolce was an expert playwright who managed to reshape Plautus's text for an audience already familiar with the new comic genre that had enjoyed wide success in Italy during the 30 years prior. The collaboration of Dolce and Giolito marked the beginning of a new phase of appreciation for Plautus (Padoan 1982, pp. 189–195; Terpening 1997, pp. 59–91).

Conclusion

The brief period in which the comedies of Plautus returned to the stage in vernacular form demonstrates their importance for the development of modern comedy. Some of their macroscopic elements, beginning with the complex structure of the storylines and the typology of recurring characters, furnished sixteenth-century comedy writers with an inexhaustible source of inspiration. However, the actual Plautine text, with its sophisticated linguistic intricacies and rich variety of meters, did not have the opportunity to influence modern comic writing. Reworked using the conventions most typical of Italian poetic production, the comedies of Plautus took on a new form, which was quickly dismissed as an obsolete experiment when authors such as Ariosto, Machiavelli, and Pietro Aretino managed to insert the dynamism of an extremely rich literary and theatrical heritage (that of medieval Italian tradition) into the traditional forms of classical comedy. We might say that, thanks to the Ercole D'Este's forward-thinking intuition, the comedies of Plautus became a formidable experimental playground, which generated new attempts at a composite theatrical genre destined to flourish on the European stage. For this reason, when these experimental reworkings of Plautine comedies reached Venice, after the initial success of Cherea's performances they were soon set aside as second-rate precursors to the newborn Italian comedy.

NOTES

- 1 I wish to thank Erin Brady, who translated the original Italian text of this chapter.
- 2 In fact, along with a letter to Francesco from barely two days later (Mantua, State Archive, Archivio Gonzaga, E.XXXI Busta 1184 2), Ercole enclosed a copy of *Captivi* and *Mercator*, which he had drawn from the vernacular prose text in his library. As we know from two letters from February 1479, Battista Guarini had translated some Plautine comedies for Ercole in order to give him an accessible version in prose of the Plautine corpus. This text was probably kept in one volume, unfortunately lost, which

was registered in one of the ducal library catalogs. Ercole probably refers to this very volume in his letter to Francesco Gonzaga (Guastella 2007, pp. 97–110).

- 3 According to Giovan Battista Giraldi Cinzio, Celio Calcagnini would also have produced his vernacular translation of *Miles Gloriosus* and Ariosto his versions of *Andria* and *Eunuchus*, composing the individual parts that were immediately given to the performers (Weinberg 1970, p. 473).
- 4 *Asinaria* was the first Plautine vernacularization to be printed, in 1515 (with a reference to a performance of the comedy in the convent of Santo Stefano). Of the six Plautine translations, Zoppino only reprinted *Penolo* in 1532, the same year he also produced an isolated edition of a Terentian play (*Eunuchus*, in prose).

FURTHER READING

For the improvisation techniques used in poetic performances in Renaissance Italy, see Haar (1981, 1986) and Degl’Innocenti (2011, 2014, 2015). Other theatrical forms in Ercole d’Este’s Ferrara are described in Lipani (2012). Kelly (1993) still provides a useful introduction to medieval ideas of comic and tragic genres. A general outlook on the methods of translation in Plautine Italian vernacularizations can be derived from Guastella (2013). For other recent editions of Plautine and Terentian Italian vernacularizations, see Favaretto (2010, 2011a, b) and Rossetto (1996).

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CHAPTER THIRTY

Plautus in Early Modern England

George Fredric Franko

Polonius touts the actors to Hamlet:

The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral; scene individable, or poem unlimited. Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men. (*Hamlet* 2.2.379–384)

Was the allusion to two of the three extant Roman dramatists a highbrow witticism shared by (or aimed at) two university-educated characters, the full import of which eluded the grasp of many early modern Londoners? Or was it a cliché familiar to any member of the audience possessing a grammar school education or casual knowledge of the theater? Francis Meres' 1598 collection of commonplaces *Palladis Tamia* proclaims: "As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage" (2.317–318). The final phrase of Meres' comparison shifts our attention from genre ("Comedy and Tragedy") to performance ("for the stage"). As readers of Shakespeare's works, we extol his wordcraft. As spectators of Shakespeare's plays, we extol his stagecraft. We may adduce many explanations for the pleasure we take in Shakespeare's drama, and certainly his experience as a performer and collaborator in a professional company enhanced his stagecraft. But some part of his creative mastery derives from his continued exploration of Plautus, which animates the entire corpus, from *The Comedy of Errors* to *The Tempest*, not just in the literary qualities of plot, character, and theme, but in how actors and characters interact with us, their live audience.

This chapter will examine the tradition and reception of Plautus in early modern England with three focal points: (i) that prioritizing books over performances underrates

Plautus's impact; (ii) that grammar schools gave audiences a basic, if fragmented, acquaintance with Roman drama; and (iii, and most important) that exploration of original practices illuminates the confluence of Plautus and Shakespeare.

Performances Versus Books

Seeking evidence for Plautus's reception in early modern England might remind one of a joke popular among historians. One night a policeman asked a man searching intensely under a streetlight if he needed assistance. "Yes, officer, I lost my wallet back there in the alley." "Then why are you looking for it out here?" "Because this is where the light is!" Since Plautus was a playwright, we cannot restrict the hunt for his traces to only textual matter, as we might do for nondramatic authors such as Ovid, Vergil, or Plutarch. Plays are evanescent events experienced by a group sharing a space and time. For the early modern era, documentary evidence of a play's performance had generally haphazard survival: a reference in a diary, a props list, a scene plot, a complaint to an official, and similar materials carefully collected in the multivolume *Records of Early English Drama*. Much of the ephemera existed not in print but in handwritten form, with limited, private, and short-lived circulation. In contrast, printed texts are objects intended for public dissemination and permanent accessibility among a readership spread over space and time. Assessing the reception and popularity of Plautus among playwrights, players, and audiences based on traces in printed texts (objects) rather than performances (events) replicates the joke of searching for the wallet under the streetlight.

To wit: we sometimes read that Terence was the more popular and influential Roman comic dramatist in England, a conclusion bolstered by his primacy in the bibliographic record. For example, a quarto phrasebook of excerpts from Terence with interlinear English translation, the *Vulgaria quedam abs Terencio in anglicam linguam traducta*, appeared in 1483, a mere decade after the first book printed in England. All six comedies of Terence were printed in two quartos in 1495–1497, followed by a complete folio edition with commentary in 1504. Sixteenth-century English publishers reprinted texts of Terence from continental editors, who had augmented the scripts with extensive literary commentaries on comic theory. For Plautus, no Latin edition was printed in England until 1711, and none was produced by an English editor until Wagner's in 1878. No demand for a native edition emerged to supplant the continental editions of Camerarius (Basel, 1552) and Lambinus (Paris, 1576, fresh off the frisket when Shakespeare and his peers attended grammar school). Likewise, the earliest English translation of a complete classical script was *Terens in Englysh (Andria)* in 1520, and Richard Bernard gave a full bilingual edition of all six Terentian plays in 1598. For Plautus, we know of only one translation of *Menaechmi* in 1595, and no English translation of the complete plays appeared until the eighteenth century. "In the enterprise of printing classical comedy in England in the sixteenth century, Terence enjoyed a monopoly" (Smith 2015, p. 399).

But to rely upon the evidence of bibliography perpetuates "a kind of antitheatrical prejudice" that fosters "an invidious comparison between read and performed comedy, between drama as text and drama as theater" (Hardin 2007, p. 799). For assessing the impact of playwrights, performances can be more significant than printed texts. The

database of the online *Archive of Performance of Greek and Roman Drama* (www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk) yields the following totals for plays by the Roman dramatists staged from 1510 to 1600: 31 plays of Plautus (including 23 at Cambridge, 2 at Oxford, 5 by grammar schools); 19 of Terence (including 12 at Cambridge, 2 at Oxford, 6 by grammar schools; curiously, none after 1567); and 13 of Seneca (including 7 at Cambridge; none after 1563, 3 at Oxford, 1 at Westminster School). Granted that the records of ephemeral performances survive fortuitously and perhaps misleadingly, those raw numbers and ratios do permit tentative conclusions. First, Plautus was the most popular Roman dramatist (cf. Hosley 1967, p. 131 on the “high tide” of 1548–1583 at Cambridge, with 17 productions of Plautus versus 5 of Terence). Those numbers could reflect either the availability of more titles for performing or the sense that Plautine scripts offer better stagecraft relative to Terence, who lacks comparable *vis comica*, and Seneca, whose works appear better suited to staged reading than full performance. Second, numbers and ratios suggest that for staging Roman comedies, universities preferred Plautus (25 at university and 5 by grammar schools; 5 to 1), and grammar schools preferred Terence (14 at university and 6 by grammar schools; slightly over 2 to 1). Third, Seneca was almost the exclusive domain of universities (10 productions) rather than grammar schools (1 production). The latter two points corroborate anecdotal evidence about university performances, such as the 1592 remark by the don and playwright William Gager, who defends Oxford scholars playing on stage in order “to be well acquainted with *Seneca* or *Plautus*” (Boas 1914, p. 235; italics Gager’s). Thus, Polonius may articulate the judgment of a university wit in accord with a stereotype: for impersonation, libertine Plautine characters are more suitable for young men, and Terentian types safer for lads.

Polonius evaluates drama as live theater. His boast that he once played Julius Caesar at university and “was accounted a good actor” (3.2.89–94; a metatheatrical clue that the same actor had played Caesar in Shakespeare’s play) implies that he possesses a university-level experience of Roman drama. Latin plays were an essential component of the university program. For example, Queen’s College, Cambridge, on pain of expulsion required performance or attendance in a comedy or tragedy (Nelson 1989, pp. 712, 1117: 1546–1547). Polonius cites Plautus and Seneca to praise the range of the actors as excellent for playing both the writ and the liberty. He means both the play’s characters and, metatheatrically, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men performing *Hamlet*. His choice to laud Plautus in the palace of Elsinore reminds us that the performance of Roman comedies had longstanding royal Tudor approval. In 1520, Cardinal Wolsey organized entertainment for Henry VIII and his court, including a “goodly commedy of Plautus” (Smith 1988, p. 117: “the earliest recorded performance of a classical play at the English court”). Wolsey also sponsored productions of Plautus’s *Menaechmi* at Hampton Court (1526) and Terence’s *Phormio* by St. Paul’s Boys (1527). From the outset of her reign, Elizabeth also approved the staging of Roman comedies by universities and schools, including shows for Her Majesty. Her 1560 statute commanded that scholars of Westminster School perform a Latin comedy or tragedy during Christmastide (Motter 1929, p. 86); in 1564 Cambridge staged for her Plautus’s *Aulularia*; and in 1565 Westminster School performed for her Terence’s *Heauton Timoroumenos* and Plautus’s *Miles Gloriosus*. In short, Polonius introduces Plautus not as a *recherché* allusion but as a theatrical touchstone of schools, universities, and the court.

Morality, Fragmentation, and Impersonation

So, readings and performances in grammar schools provided a baseline of shared experience of Roman comedy, to which universities would add increased familiarity for a select few. T.W. Baldwin's monumental and magisterial *Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (1944) assembled the evidence then available in an impressive, almost unassailable fashion to rebut Ben Jonson's perceived slight to Shakespeare's level of education. Baldwin established that grammar school curricula equipped their graduates with more Latin than does a modern undergraduate classics major, including readings and performances from Terence and Plautus. He thereby modified the vision of Shakespeare as an inspired but undereducated bard and, by extension, helped modify the view of all groundlings as ignorant.

That said, Burrow (2004, p. 21) correctly asserts that, "*what* Shakespeare read (even if we could reconstruct it) matters less than *how* he read it – indeed the 'how' can often supplant the 'what.'" Indeed, we can reasonably suppose an evolution in the reading habits of a student who matures into an increasingly confident theater professional. For example, while a young student forced to read a Roman biography might focus on the factoids of history and morality, a seasoned, professional playwright picking up Plutarch might imagine the dramatic potential of a passage. How much might he retain of the direct speeches in Plutarch's *Coriolanus*? What passages in narration lend themselves to dramatization? How could a scene materialize onstage within the parameters of the Rose, or the Globe, or the Blackfriars? A teacher or commentator might appreciate a Plautine monologue for its development of character or theme; a dramatist or performer might perceive its benefit to establish an actor's rapport with the audience or to cover a costume change in a play with continuous action performed by a small cast. Since Baldwin and others have identified the contents of the curricula (the "what"), I would like to focus on three features that shaped an early modern person's experience of Roman comedy generally, and of Plautus specifically, in ways that differ from our own experience (the "how"): morality, fragmentation, and impersonation.

First, moral considerations kept Plautus out of the limelight. With the Tudors and Stuarts seeking to inculcate the rhetoric and virtues of classical humanism alongside shifting demands of Catholic, Calvinist, Anglican, and Puritan constituencies, the purported humane values of Terence seemed more suitable for students, readers, players, and audiences than the carnivalesque world of Plautus (McPherson 1981; Hardin 2007, 2018). As the sixteenth century waned, the moral values of the Plautine corpus appeared increasingly risqué for the general public. The title page of W.W.'s 1595 translation of *Menaechmi* – the lone Plautine play translated into English – advertises safety before jollity: *chosen purposely from out the rest, as least harmefull, and yet most delightfull*. As noted above, Plautus was read and performed, especially at universities, but traces of culture wars in textbooks, pedagogical manuals, and the statutes and ordinances for grammar schools indicate that selections from Terence, or even Christian plays based on Terence, received more overt endorsement from educators.

Arguably the most significant native figure for the early modern English curriculum was Alexander Nowell, Dean of St. Paul's School and author of the official 1570 Anglican catechism. Nowell became master of Westminster School in 1543, where he introduced

the study of Terence and endorsed performances of his plays. His prologue to *Eunuchus* justifies the practice:

Here you may get to know harlots' filthiness, gluttony, greed, all without any danger but with great usefulness and much delight, so that once you have learned it you will always hate it. (Smith 1988, p. 142)

The “here” of Terence could imply a “there” of Plautus, whose delights might prove too dangerous for impressionable minds.

After Nowell, two popular pedagogical manuals reflect a range of reactions to the perceived impropriety of Plautus, from guarded praise to damning silence. Roger Ascham, a tutor to Princess Elizabeth, addressed his *Scholemaster* (1570, published posthumously) to those of higher social standing who could afford private tutors. With rhetorical training as the primary goal, Ascham advocates:

... some comedy of Terence or Plautus: but in Plautus, skillful choice must be used by the master, to train his scholar to a judgment, in cutting out perfectly over old and unproper words. (Book 2, p. 87)

For moral content, Ascham declares:

both Plautus and Terence be like mean painters that work by halves and be cunning only in making the worst part of the picture, as if one were skillful in painting the body of a naked person from the navel downward, but nothing else. (Book 2, p. 143; one may detect a bawdy joke in “cunning” and “naked ... navel downward”)

Decades after Ascham, Puritan John Brinsley's *Ludus Literarius* (1612) omits Plautus entirely and gives only two grudging mentions of Terence. Brinsley had his adherents, but his views on education reflect the ardent and anti-theatrical Puritanism of his sponsor Henry Hastings, the Earl of Huntingdon, and should not be considered representative of the national mainstream – at least not for Elizabeth's reign generally, nor for Plautus specifically, as some have argued.¹ Since the sometimes idiosyncratic recommendations of Nowell, Ascham, and Brinsley illuminate ideals more than practices, we must not confine our search for Plautus to the orbit of their streetlights.

For common practices throughout the realm, statutes and ordinances may provide better evidence than educational tracts. True, variations by decade and county challenge any purported national educational system for early modern England, and Burrow rightly reminds us that the schools of St. Paul's, Westminster, and Eton provided only a model that many Tudor grammar schools could or would not follow in practice (2004, p. 12). Nevertheless, for the role of Roman comedy in the Elizabethan realm's curriculum, we might take as reasonably representative the statutes for a pair of schools in Wales. Those for Bangor (1568) mandate for the third form that the Usher shall teach Erasmus, Ovid's *Tristia*, and “some of the comedies of Plautus or Terence such as be most chaste and least meddled with wantonness.” Those for Ruthin (c. 1575), drawn up by Gabriel Goodman, Dean of Westminster, mandate that for the third class the Usher “shall hear his Scholars rehearse an Act out of Terence's comedies or Plautus ... Both in the manner of Speaking

and Gesture.” We should note the focus on morality, learning through physical impersonation, and selected acts rather than whole plays.

Second, fragmentation. Early moderns did not study Roman drama as we do – whole plays as specimens of Roman literary and cultural history – but often met excerpts out of context in anthologies and commonplace books. Ancient plays offered veins mined for grammatical, rhetorical, and performable models for imitation. The focus on fragmentation and imitation of excellent Latin phrases helps explain the popularity of Nicholas Udall’s *Floures for Latine Spekyng* (1533). This florilegium provided a model for speaking colloquial Latin by giving running excerpts of three scripts of Terence (*Andria*, *Eunuchus*, *Heauton*; the plays without a *leno*, hence more chaste), interspersed with various colloquial English renderings. Udall, headmaster at Eton from 1534 to 1541 and successor to Nowell as master of Westminster School, was a sort of impresario. He staged interludes for the coronation of Anne Boleyn in 1533 and court performances in 1537/1538 and 1554, plus penned *Ralph Roister Doister*, the play that brought the Plautine *miles gloriosus* into the English theatrical repertoire. The *Floures* sold well, for it was enlarged, reprinted several times, and eventually supplemented with Terence’s three other plays in 1575. While a general reader might buy his flowers, Udall plucked them for use in grammar schools. His prefatory dedication figures his students as budding actors: “to the most sweet troupe of his students” (*suavissimo discipulorum suorum gregi*). The book had obvious appeal and utility for students, for it empowered and liberated them to converse within the schoolhouse in accordance with statutes and ordinances that explicitly prohibited them from chattering in English. *Floures* became a staple of Latin pedagogy in early modern England. Learning to speak Latin meant learning to speak the words of Terence and impersonate his characters.

Fragmentation is linked with, and enables, impersonation. To modern readers, Udall’s book might seem a disorienting fragmentation of Terence’s scripts, for it gives a sequence of lines in Latin and English renderings with no indication of speakers or context. But to early moderns the Latin in *Floures* must have resembled cue scripts, the standard format for receiving one’s lines prior to group rehearsal. Early modern actors did not receive a copy of the entire script; instead, they received only their fragmented part in a roll (hence our terms “part” and “role”), with one- to three-word cues prefixed to their speeches, without indication of who spoke the cue or in what context. Shakespeare spoofs the process in the hilarious rehearsals of Bottom and the rude Mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The system of fragmentation not only satisfied a need for economy and speed in disseminating parts in manuscript, it also influenced the composition and performance of the plays (Stern 2009). Put bluntly: everyone learning to speak Latin from Udall’s florilegium surreptitiously underwent training in theatrical, comic impersonation.

Just as Udall’s fragmented presentation of Terence should remind us that our experience of Terence differs materially from the early modern experience, so also the fragmented presentation of Plautus’s scripts differed from modern editions, and these differences must have affected appreciation and appropriation of Plautus’s dramaturgy. For example, while editors divided all of Terence’s plays into five acts, Lambinus’s 1576 edition of Plautus, like that of Camerarius before him, did not. Lambinus divided only 4 of the 20 plays into 5 acts, with 4 others having partial divisions. Act divisions did not matter (cf. Chapter 27, pp. 410–411 on the imposition of act and scene divisions in

Plautus). Possibly of greater significance, where Camerarius had printed each script followed by notes for the entire play, Lambinus divided each script into discrete scenes followed immediately by commentary on that scene. Every scene stands as a discrete compositional or performative unit. We should recall how the posthumous imposition of act divisions on Shakespeare's scripts privileges reading over watching, thereby distorting a reader's encounter with a play's structure. In live performance with continuous action and without choral interludes, or pauses to relight candles, one does not mark the acts. Shakespeare's plays unfold in a sequence of entrances and exits filled with monologues, dialogues, songs, clowning, and swordfights. As with Plautus, the relevant compositional unit for Shakespeare is the scene.² To my mind, Polonius's somewhat opaque contrast between "scene indivisible versus poem unlimited" recalls the physical presentation of scripts, as well as a theory of composition and performance.

Plautus in Shakespearean Performance

In the first scene of *Jack Juggler*, a play cribbed from Plautus's *Amphitruo* (1550s; anonymous but very possibly Udall's), Jenkin Caraway calls for help. Smith rightly observes that his addressees are not "the citizens of Thebes but the spectators gathered informally around the acting place in the middle of a great hall" (1988, p. 148). Smith traces such audience contact to longstanding and robust native dramatic traditions, positing a transfer in "the action of Plautus's play from the rational distance of the Roman stage to the organic space of medieval playacting." But given the dubious construct of a "rational distance of the Roman stage," I would advocate for a complementary origin: the Plautine script itself. *Jack Juggler*'s author did not graft a vulgar tradition onto classical stock; he cultivated the theatrical vigor already present within the classical stock. We need not choose a single origin when a performative element exists in both traditions, for early modern English drama offered playwrights a garden of generic native, continental, and classical cultivars from which to graft and hybridize. While Polonius's categorization of genres quoted above should remind us that generic commingling was the norm, the commonly invoked horticultural metaphor risks framing a discussion with genealogies, stemmata, and compositional genetics.

Studies of tradition and reception have progressed from explicating verbal echoes and comparing ancient originals with modern adaptations to appreciating how early modern dramatists refreshed and expanded inherited plots, characters, and themes. Robert Miola's work (2004), for example, demonstrates not only the obvious "influence" of Plautine and Terentian elements on Shakespeare's comedies, but also how comedic motifs migrate across generic boundaries to enrich tragedies such as *Hamlet* and *Lear*. But since it prioritizes tradition over reception, the concept of "influence" used by Miola and others may sometimes strike us as less apt than (e.g.) "intertextuality." While one can disentangle strands of textiles, it is much harder to "take unmingled thence that drop again, without addition or diminishing" (*The Comedy of Errors* 2.2.127–128). Keeping Adriana's aqueous metaphor, "confluence" offers a better image than "influence" because it retains the metaphoric suggestion of a deep, pervasive, and often invisible presence without fetishizing a particular source or reducing moderns to passive receptacles.

Two problems complicate any search for Plautine and Shakespearean confluence. First, “the way in which Shakespeare learned to read and imitate the classics had the effect of ultimately making the classics almost invisible in his work” (Burrow 2004, p 18). Second, the admixture of conventions from continental – especially Italian – and English intermediaries makes the task of isolating direct, undiluted Plautine presence nearly impossible (cf. Elk 2013, p. 410 on Terence). Two eyewitness accounts of performances of Shakespeare’s *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night* document the interrelation of these problems. The *Gesta Grayorum* (1594) records that “a *Comedy of Errors* (like to Plautus his *Menechmus*) was played by the Players.” Here the Plautine source floats transparently near the surface of Shakespeare’s adaptation. Eight years later (1602), John Manningham records that “wee had a play called Twelve night or what you will ... much like the *Commedy of Errores* or *Menechmi* in Plautus but most like and neere to that in Italian called *Inganni*.” Now the Plautine current of *Menaechmi* flows at a deeper level, alongside Shakespeare’s own *Comedy of Errors*, and beneath the Italian *Inganni*. We see Plautus feelingly. With caution and nuance, however, one can posit Plautine confluences in performance. For a recent example, Traill (2015, pp. 214–215) has invoked Louise George Clubb’s concept of the transnational theatergram:

a dramaturgic element that exists within a common repertoire and is subject to permutation, combination and gradual evolution [...] recognizable by playwright and audience alike, and capacious enough to cover specific relationships as well as more general ones, and performance traditions as well as textual sources.

Traill demonstrates how the theatergram of gulling used against Pyrgopolynices in *Miles Gloriosus* informs sequences in *Much Ado about Nothing*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Twelfth Night*.

Shakespeare and other Tudor playwrights must have read Plautus with fresh vision amidst the emergence of professional companies who performed in purpose-built theaters beginning in the 1570s. They would no longer read Plautus as students or teachers seeking to speak and write Latin, or even for a literary appreciation of plot, characters, act divisions, and other instances of Donatus’s precepts on comic theory. More likely, they devoured ancient scripts as theater practitioners looking for material and techniques to support their livelihood. Such extra-textual traces may be hard to find (back to the streetlight metaphor), but recent progress in recovering and learning from original practices may enable us to discover and assess commonalities and differences in Roman and early modern English staging. New theaters built to the specifications of early modern plans – especially the Blackfriars Playhouse at the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Virginia, and The Globe in London – now serve as laboratories for actors to rediscover extra-textual presumptions and opportunities in the play scripts (e.g. Menzer 2006; Carson and Karim-Cooper 2008). While we have far less evidence for the original practices of Roman antiquity, the works of Marshall on stagecraft and performance (2006), Moore on music and meter (2012), and even experiments such as the 2012 NEH Summer Institute on “Roman Comedy in Performance” help to underscore the importance of staging for our understanding of Roman comedy.

“We do it with the lights on!” is a slogan of the American Shakespeare Center. Their devotion to original practices includes universal lighting, wherein the chandelier

houselights stay on, without spotlights. Actors interact with spectators, some of whom sit on stage, and all of whom become part of the show. In such an environment, there is no fourth wall. In such a venue, audience contact does not break convention; it is convention. And it is Plautine. The very first line of the very first script (*Amphitruo*) in an edition of Plautus heralds the convention when Mercury addresses the audience directly with no less than three second-person forms and an onomastic pun: *ut vos in vobis vultis mercimoniis* (“as you all wish in your Mer ... chandizing”). Plautine characters – not just prologue-speakers – often address the audience directly, both implicitly and explicitly with the vocative *spectatores* or *vos*. Terence avoids direct address outside of his polemical prologues.

Aulularia demonstrates the technique when frantic Euclio involves the audience as both collective group and individuals:

I’m begging you (pl.)! I’m beseeching you! I’m imploring you: help me and show me the man who’s stolen it! What do *you* (s.) say? I’ve decided to trust *you*, for I can see from your face that you’re a good man [*bonum*; an aristocrat in the front row?]. What is it? Why are you (pl.) laughing? I recognize you all; I know that there are lots of thieves here, who hide under spiffy clothes and sit there as if they were honest. Ha! None of them has it? You’ve (s.) ruined me! So tell me, who has it? Don’t you (s.) know? (715–720)

The actor engages the spectators to provoke laughter, dissolving any boundary between the fictive Athens and the Roman stage. Or again, at *Curculio* 466–485 (quoted in Chapter 19, p. 296) the Choragus turns the spotlight (so to speak) on his audience by giving a tour of the Roman Forum and categories of its unsavory occupants. The same technique enlivens (e.g.) *Measure for Measure*, when Pompey singles out members of his audience as customers of Mistress Overdone’s bawdy house:

First, here’s young Master Rash; he’s in for a commodity of brown paper and old ginger [...] Then is there here one Master Capar, at the suit of Master Three-pile the mercer, for some four suits of peach-coloured satin, which now peaches him a beggar. Then have we here young Dizzy, and young Master Deep-vow, and Master Copperspur, and Master Starve-lackey the rapier and dagger man, and young Drop-heir that killed lusty Pudding, and Master Forthlight the tilter, and brave Master Shooty the great traveller, and wild Half-can that stabbed Pots, and, I think, forty more ... (4.3.3–15)

The troupe does not parade a cast of 10 actors impersonating Viennese; the speaker teases individual English theatergoers in the audience, avoiding offense with fictive monikers.

While physical and verbal contact with spectators existed in vulgar drama, Plautus gave such interaction classical cachet. We find a neat example in George Chapman’s *The Gentleman Usher* (1602), Act 1, Scene 1, as Sarpego boasts:

When I in Padua schoolde it,
I plaid in one of Plautus comedies,
Namely, *Curculio*, where his part I acted,
Projecting from the poore summe of foure lines
Forty faire actions ...

Before he proceeds to don a costume and perform the opening lines of Curculio's running messenger speech in Latin, he warns that he will "over-tumble every man I meete" and might trip up the "honord heels" of his audience (cf. Chapter 19, p. 297). Notably his emphasis for Plautine delivery falls on the 40 extra-textual actions prompted by speech. Excessive, yes, but even schoolboy actors realize the task of helping readers recognize stage directions embedded in a script, especially for a play in a second language. Hamlet would not have endorsed Sarpego's sawing the air, but it typifies the liberty of improvisation essential to Plautine comedy, as opposed to the law of writ for Senecan tragedy.

Performance criticism illuminates the freedom with which Shakespeare integrated Plautine techniques throughout his plays. When we experience Roman and early modern staging with universal lighting, then monologues, soliloquies, and asides become less revelations of interior thoughts that strain a cinematic naturalism or a dramatic illusion than invitations to the audience to share an intimate complicity.³ The power of a soliloquy resides not with the voyeuristic audience eavesdropping on the interior monologue of a character unaware of our presence, but with the character reaching out to establish rapport with us. Moore's 1998 study of Plautine theater opens with chapters on how actors and characters build rapport with spectators and starts from a simple fact:

More than one-sixth of Plautus's corpus – and over one-quarter of some plays – is made up of monologues. Though a few monologues include the pretense that characters speak to themselves or think aloud [...], most must have been addressed explicitly and emphatically to the audience. (p. 8)

We can see how Shakespeare had learned and amplified this essential principle of Plautine dramatic technique early in his career through comparison of *The Comedy of Errors* with its source text *Menaechmi*. First, *Menaechmi* (258–264; trans. Erich Segal, modified):

Now here's the race of men you'll find in Epidamnus:
The greatest libertines, the greatest drinkers too,
The most bamboozlers and charming flatterers
Dwell in this city. And as for wanton women, well –
Nowhere in the world, I'm told, are they more seductive.
Because of this, they call the city Epidamnus,
For no one leaves unscathed, un-"epidamaged."

Now, *The Comedy of Errors* (1.2.97–103):

They say this town is full of cozenage,
As nimble jugglers that deceive the eye,
Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind,
Soul-killing witches that deform the body,
Disguisèd cheaters, prating mountebanks,
And many such-like liberties of sin:
If it prove so, I will be gone the sooner.

Where Plautus punctuates the fleshy debauchery of a port town with a pun, Shakespeare augments bodily threats with existential angst and danger to the immortal Christian

soul. “Liberties of sin” (the Folio’s reading) dissolves the boundary between the fictive Ephesus on stage and the real London of the spectators, for “liberties” were the areas permitted to present plays inside the City of London because of a special exemption from the usual civil, religious, and regal prohibitions (and this legal sense may lurk beneath Polonius’s allusion to Plautus and “the liberty”). In Plautus, the slave Messenio warns his master; it is dialogue. While the masked actor playing Messenio might gesture to some in the outdoor audience, he addresses Menaechmus. In Shakespeare, Antipholus gives a monologue. While a naturalistic actor could muse aloud to himself, the passage invites a stronger choice by fingering individual spectators as the “jugglers ... sorcerers ... witches ... cheaters ... mountebanks.” The joke thrives on the intimacy of actors and audience. The oldest attested indoor performances engaged with a few hundred lawyers at the 1594 show at Gray’s Inn (a liberty) and the courtiers surrounding King James at Hampton Court in 1604. The passage exemplifies at a granular level how early competitive Shakespeare tries to out-Plautus Plautus, just as at the level of plot he adds a second set of twin Dromios to amplify the confusion of mistaken identities.

Moore identifies how Plautus’s characters establish and shift inside a “hierarchy of rapport” with the audience (1998, chapter 2). Direct address establishes an individual’s baseline rapport with us, which increases or decreases throughout the play. Scenes of eavesdropping configure the hierarchy most clearly, with successful eavesdroppers joining the audience and sharing our sense of superiority over those overheard. We delight when the eavesdroppers make asides to us without their target overhearing those asides. *Twelfth Night* shows the technique in quintessential form. As Malvolio reads aloud and analyzes a letter forged by the clever maid Maria in Act 2, Scene 5, Toby Belch, Andrew Aguecheek, and Fabian eavesdrop and comment. The scene elevates those tricksters to the top of the hierarchy and sinks Malvolio, both for his vain gullibility and his failure to establish confidential communication with the audience. Malvolio’s nadir comes in Act 4, Scene 2, when he speaks to Feste through the trap door from his imprisonment beneath the stage, a disembodied voice overheard. By exploiting the early modern stage building’s spatial hierarchy of the heavens and the trap, Shakespeare makes explicit and visible Plautus’s implicit hierarchy of rapport.

Plautus’s clever slaves enjoy a special intimacy with the audience thanks to their monologues, eavesdropping, witty asides, and triumphant boasts. Pseudolus, Chrysalus, Tranio, and other Plautine – but not Terentian! – *servi callidi* build rapport with the audience to make palpable their figurative control of a play’s plot. So, too, do Plautine – but not Terentian! – clever maids such as Acroteleutium, Milphidippa, and Pardalisca. Anderson dubs the clever and immoral machinations of Plautine tricksters “heroic badness” (*malitia*) and praises it as “one of the great achievements of Roman and comic literature” (1993, p. 89, but “literature” rather than “drama”). Shakespeare extends heroic *malitia* beyond servants to many other character types. The allure or challenge of scripting other characters as Plautine schemers appears irresistible. Noblemen, women, friars, and knaves all construct plays-within-a-play typical of the Plautine trickster: consider Don Pedro, Hero, Friar Francis, Borachio, Don John, and others in *Much Ado About Nothing*. We applaud Rosalind in *As You Like It*, whose ruses and disguises effect romantic love. We feel disquiet at Portia’s cruel mercy based on legal chicanery and ruthless subversion of the trope of a recognition ring in *Merchant of Venice*. In *Measure for Measure*, set in an immoral

Vienna where “Liberty plucks Justice by the nose” (1.3.28), the Duke Vincentio himself plays the role of the cunning slave with a bit too much relish. Among other machinations, he disguises himself as a monk and scripts a deception to entrap and marry off his lieutenant Angelo to Mariana, who poses as the nun Isabella, divulging his plans to both allies and the audience to build rapport. *Measure* rightly strikes us as a “problem comedy.” Among several sources of our discomfort, we balk at having the politically supreme figure appropriate disguise and trickery, the oppositional resources of the powerless. Here again, Plautus offers a ready precedent or model in his *tragicomoedia Amphitruo*, where supreme Jupiter uses disguise and deceit to commit adultery with Mercury’s crafty help. Such a confluence does not minimize our discomfort, but it offers a genealogy of powerful figures performing *malitia* before an audience, one perhaps even stretching back to Dionysus in *Bacchae*.

Shakespeare extends clever intriguing in both plot structures and dynamics of performance beyond comedy to tragedy, even to villains (Harbage 1962). The gambit of playing other characters as Plautine schemers may culminate with the elaborate intrigues of Hamlet or Iago, or perhaps the competitive conniving of Edmund the bastard and Edgar the legitimate in *Lear*. Structurally, Edmund dupes with a forged letter Gloucester (the *senex*, his adoptive “credulous father,” 1.2.63, conflated text) and with words his brother Edgar (the rival, “on whose foolish honesty my practices ride easy,” 1.2.65–66). Edmund tips a metatheatrical hat to tricksters of Roman comedy: “and pat he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy. My cue is villainous melancholy” (1.2.123–124). Reading the script, we appreciate the psychological insights in Edmund’s monologues delivered before, between, and after his deceptions of Gloucester and Edgar. Seeing the play, we feel the concrete application of those insights, for the “we” and “our” are not apostrophes addressed to the heavens. Edmund addresses *you*, the flesh and blood spectators with whom he shares the room:

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeit of our own behavior, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains by necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers, by spherical pre-dominance ... (1.2.109–114)

Edgar will counter with his own deceits by pretending to be the madman Tom o’Bedlam, duping his father at Dover cliffs, and using a letter and disguise to engineer a duel with Edmund (Miola 2004, p. 191). Heroic *malitia* intending either good or evil compete for our endorsement, with all the rhetorical training of grammar school delivered not behind a fourth wall, but directly to us.

We can – and should – extend such observations beyond Shakespeare to other early modern English playwrights. Doing so will reorient our inquiries from the streetlight of direct plot comparisons between original and adaptation (e.g. Ben Jonson’s *The Case is Altered* with *Captivi* and *Aulularia*; Thomas Heywood’s *The Captives* with *Rudens*) to more insightful, if somewhat speculative, explorations of stagecraft inside the playhouse. And doing so will allow us to appreciate more fully the relevance of Plautine stagecraft for the observations of Polonius (“the best *actors*”) and Meres (“for the *stage*”).⁴

NOTES

- 1 Although Brinsley does direct his book to provincial schoolmasters, Burrow (2004, p. 12) goes too far in claiming that Brinsley's hobbyhorsical book "is probably our best guide to Shakespeare's school." For example, the statutes and orders for Hastings' schools at Leicester and Ashby-de-la-Zouch, where Brinsley taught in 1600–1617, required students of the uppermost forms to participate in the intensive Bible study called prophesying, a mandate unique in extant grammar school statutes and orders. In 1576, Queen Elizabeth placed the Archbishop of Canterbury, Edmund Grindal, under house arrest for refusing to suppress prophesying.
- 2 Contra Baldwin and some of his followers, Shakespeare emphatically did not compose his scripts according to a literary canon of five acts. The Quartos make no such divisions; the first Folio of 1623 (a deluxe edition emulating the literary qualities of Ben Jonson's collected works) prints many plays without them and some with only partial divisions. Eighteenth-century editions imposed the anachronistic, reified grid of five acts with scenic subdivisions on all the plays.
- 3 For example, the stage direction "aside" prefixed to speeches in modern texts of Shakespeare is an editorial construct appropriate to later, naturalistic theater. "The only examples in the Shakespeare canon of what today is deemed the normative use of *aside* therefore are seen to be in (1) a suspect part of *Pericles* (2) a 'bad' quarto" (Dessen 2006, p. 51). Early modern playwrights did sometimes mark a speech for an aside (e.g. "to himself"), but generally asides were delivered to the audience.
- 4 I wish to thank Paul Menzer, Matthew Radford Davies, Wayne Markert, and Dorota Dutsch for their insights.

FURTHER READING

For classical reception in England, see Cheney and Hardie (2015). Green (2009) offers a sound historical overview of humanism in early modern English education. While Baldwin's useful works may suffer from the Scylla of naïve positivism, some modern studies drown in the Charybdis of theory (e.g. Enterline 2012; advances in neuroscience and cognitive psychology prohibit taking Freud and Lacan seriously as templates for human development). For Shakespeare's bookshelf, Gillespie (2004), Burrow (2013), and Miola (2000) are helpful. Riehle's (1991) advocacy of Plautus gainsays Terentian and Christian connections. Dutton's collection (2009) offers excellent introductions to all aspects of early modern English theater.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Reception Today: Theater and Movies

Rodrigo T. Gonçalves

Contemporary Receptions of Plautus

There have been many important receptions of Plautus, from the late antique *Querolus* and Vital de Blois's twelfth-century *Aulularia* and *Geta* (a version of *Amphitryon*), to very important humanist and later plays, such as those by Luís de Camões (*Auto dos Enfatriões*, 1544–1549), Johannes Burmeister's *Mater Virgo* (a Christian *Amphitryon*, 1621), Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* (first published 1623), Molière's *Amphitryon* (1667) and *L'Avare* (1668, based on *Aulularia*), Dryden's *Amphitryon or the two Sosias* (1690), Antonio José da Silva's *Anfitrião ou Júpiter e Alcmena* (1736), and Kleist's *Amphitryon, ein Lustspiel nach molière* (1807). Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Plautus's plays have been adapted at least 30 times for the theater, Broadway shows, films, novels, and television, not counting “simple” or “non-authorial” translations and editions.

It is possible to propose some generalizations about these recent adaptations of Plautus: most of the plays, musicals, films, and the three novels are based on the *Amphitruo*, while several of them conflate different versions or receptions of the play. Recent reappraisals of Greek tragedy adapt, transform, and “contaminate” tragic plots, usually for political and ideological reasons and in countries “plagued by conflict,” as Lisa Maurice states (2013, p. 448). Likewise, most contemporary receptions of Plautus revisit the story of the *Amphitruo* with a focus on issues related to the doubles, infidelity, and the impossibility of fighting a totalitarian god's will. Most notably, as Maurice argues, recent postmodern theater provides an excellent context for new receptions that are not “mere translations” but can be “works of art in their own right” (Maurice 2013, p. 451). The different kinds of texts and media combined create a greater degree of metatheatrical power compared to earlier trends of reception of ancient drama.

According to Maurice, Plautine metatheater already presented several features that would resurface in postmodern theater, such as “the breaking of the fourth wall, broken non-linear narrative, subversion of character portrayal, self-conscious approach to the audience, and improvisation,” allowing for playwrights to “explore the limits and boundaries of theatrical conventions” (Maurice 2013, p. 451). Most notably, adapters, rewriters, and translators become second authors with their own agendas, *doing* multiple things other than *just* translating, or “conveying” and “transporting” meaning from the original/source to the translation/target. Especially important are Maurice’s and my own (Gonçalves 2015) conclusions about Plautus’s central role in defining standards of “barbarization” (Maurice’s term) or of “performative translation” (my term) in the transposition of the Greek “highbrow” genre of Greek New Comedy to a popular multi-layered Roman audience.

Maurice claims that it is not accidental that the very recent reappraisal and recognition of the sophistication of metatheater in Plautus (Moore 1998; Slater 2000; Marshall 2006; Dupont 2007; Dupont and Letessier 2012; Chapter 16 in this volume) should coincide with the rise of postmodern theater and multiple adaptations and radical reception of ancient theater (especially Attic tragedy). According to her, the rise of postmodern classical reception of ancient drama is a reaction to the submissive “loyal,” “faithful,” “authentic” receptions of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, scholars and playwrights observed that, in fact, Plautus was aware of the transformative power of *vertere*, making Plautus a special case for analysis of contemporary receptions.

The plays composed in this postmodern context conflate different texts, traditions, genres, and conventions in order to help fill a gap between the content of the ancient plays and the modern audience (Maurice 2013, p. 461), giving prominence to metatheater and creating a firm bond between actors and audience. Maurice’s most important claim, explored in the analyses below, is that Plautus already showed some of those traits attributed to the “postmodern theater” tradition because his Rome was quite similar to our own context with the rise of globalism, cultural assimilation, and war-generated tensions. That similarity should also explain the rise in the number and quality of receptions of his plays, among which we choose for analysis two remarkable examples: Richard Lester’s film *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and the Spanish play *Los Dioses y los Cuernos* by Alfonso Sastre. These two examples illustrate the mechanisms of appropriation of Plautine elements into the contemporary tastes, genres, and sensibilities. They also *do* things typical of metatheatrical and self-reflexive receptions of Plautus: subvert, amuse, reinforce, innovate, and comment on our own society through humor, just like Plautus did. Let us begin with the musical turned into film.

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum (1966)

Richard Lester’s film is a cinematic recreation of the Broadway hit with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and book by Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbart. It premiered on May 8, 1962, and has been staged more than a thousand times since. The 1962 version was envisioned as a way of putting Plautus on the modern stage by giving a *contaminatio*

of several themes, motifs, scenes, and characters from different Plautine plays: *Pseudolus* lends its title character; *Mostellaria* the theme of the *senex* kept away from his house with the pretext that it is haunted; *Casina* the theme of the transvestite bride and other unfoldings of men disguised as women; *Miles Gloriosus* its title character; *Curculio* the recognition scene through the ring. Several eunuch jokes suggest the writers also read Terence. In his foreword to the 1991 book version of the script, Gelbart discusses most of the motivations and ideas behind the script, which took almost five years to complete. Gelbart declares the writers' indebtedness to Plautus in very exaggerated forms: "[Plautus] invented all the devices of theatrical comedy" (1991, p. 2); "I believe that it is safe to say that there is not a joke form, comic character, or farcical situation that exists today that does not find its origin in Plautus's work. *Forum* contains at least one taste of his original flavor" (p. 3). He also exposes the trio's most important goals: "Our goal was not to modernize the master. [...] What we wanted to prove was that Plautus's characters (always one-dimensional) and his style of plotting (which could be as complicated as a Rubik's cube) were timeless" (p. 4). And finally, "we were after more than purity, however. We were not simply out to prove some esoteric point that would have had an appreciative audience of three. We wanted a commercial as well as an artistic success" (p. 4). And that success was certainly achieved.

The film added more layers and dimensions to that project, since not only was Plautus transposed from his ancient setting to a very adequate equivalent in the Broadway musical genre, but that same play was filmed as a way of surpassing the model (a process also known as "eristic impulse") and offering a very keen satire of the genre of epic sword-and-sandals films. According to Malamud (2001, p. 201):

While Shevelove and Gelbart deliberately avoided political or social commentary in their musical comedy, the film director Richard Lester [...] wanted his film comedy to expose the seamy underside of Rome and highlight its social and economic injustices, *and* he wanted to parody Hollywood film genres.

Lester, a very innovative filmmaker and an American expatriate living in London in the 1960s, had a hard time with the producer Melvin Frank, who wanted to take control over the production:

The major disagreement, though, was not on minor detail but on fundamental approach. Frank wanted a straightforward preservation of a bawdy, popular, artificial stage comedy. Lester wanted a work that was entertaining but nevertheless said something about the cruelties and injustices of the society it examined. (Sinyard 1985, p. 40)

Lester studied Jerome Carcopino's *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* and filled the set with vegetables and fruit to let them rot and attract wasps and flies, and hired peasants to do menial work during the film: "it had nothing to do with all these Broadway Jewish jokes" (Lester cited in Sinyard 1985, p. 40). Some scenes with those peasants actually served to subvert the surface meaning of the apparently patrician/high-culture/sexist-based humor (Malamud 2001, p. 202), such as is the case with the specific song "Everybody Ought to Have a Maid," in which the older male characters sing and dance tripping over poor

characters (especially female older maids) doing their degrading jobs (Malamud 2001, p. 203). So the film actually tries to ridicule and satirize the epic depictions of Rome and the ancient world such as those seen in Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra* (1963). *Cleopatra*'s infamous scene of the queen's entry into Rome is clearly parodied in some sequences of *A Funny Thing*, such as the exotic dances and songs of the courtesans in the house of the pimp Lycus.

The film's most important theme is freedom. Yet by criticizing vanity, sexism, and corruption, it also "evokes the ongoing struggles of the civil rights movement during the decade of the 1960's" (Cyrino 2005, p. 172). For example, although the slave Pseudolus is brilliant in his way of conducting the plot because he wants to be *free*, in a very curious joke early in the film, the breeder slave recently bought by the elderly Senex and Domina refuses to be taken by just anyone. "She demands to choose!" is apparently a joke that echoes the desires for freedom in many spheres of American life. However, the film has aged terribly and seems absurdly sexist for contemporary audiences, especially the infamous brothel scene. It has become more difficult to teach the film to my Roman Comedy students every year without a very serious discussion about gender roles and the obsolescence of comedy.

Although on the surface the play and the film seem to be a very innocent *contaminatio* of some of Plautus's plays, *A Funny Thing* is in fact a very clever transposition of the ancient comedic traditions to the twentieth century. It mirrors how Roman playwrights of the *palliata* appropriated Greek New Comedy by transporting the *palliata* itself into the twentieth-century tradition of burlesque, Jewish-American vaudeville, slapstick, situation comedy, musical theater, and film parody. Just as in Plautus, the result is both new and old. Some of the Plautine prologues acknowledge that the play is both Greek and Roman (e.g. *Cas.* 31–34: "This comedy is called *Kleroumenoi* in Greek; in Latin *The Lot Drawers*. Diphilus wrote it in Greek, and after that Plautus with the barking name rewrote it again in Latin.") Since the *palliata* was composed of "translations" of Greek plays, the resulting plots, characters, and settings were both Greek and Roman at the same time (Gonçalves 2015 on "performative translation"; Chapter 19 in this volume). *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, both play and film, also do that. The action is Roman, and the basic plot and character guidelines are Plautine; but the result is independent of the model and is radically modern in that the ancient genre of the *palliata* is transported to the twentieth century.

I would like to analyze some elements of the film to highlight its self-awareness as a refined reception of Plautus. Breaks in the dramatic illusion are not just "funny"; they are important for the structure of the film. For example, during the opening musical number "Comedy Tonight," which functions as a prologue, after presenting the scenery and other characters, Pseudolus advertises the main slave in the film. He qualifies him as a very clever and cunning slave, only to admit later, looking at the camera: "Let me put it this way: I play the part." Later, when the courtesan Philia mistakes Senex for the soldier and kisses him, Pseudolus returns and comments on the quick success of his search for mare sweat, the last ingredient for the sleeping potion. Looking at the camera, he remarks, "Would you believe it, there was a mare sweating not two streets from here?" Then, seeing Senex kissing Philia, with bulging eyes he quips, "gets to look more like his father every day!" Later, a bewildered Hysterium, dressed as a bride in bed with Pseudolus, looks at us for sympathy on his recently acquired part. Since Pseudolus and Hysterium are the only characters who are able to address the public directly while the other characters can only

make asides (such as the pimp Lycus's aside about the virgin when talking to the representative of Miles Gloriosus "with just a slight touch of plague"), it is clear that Lester tries to reproduce the hierarchy of rapport among characters regarding metatheatrical power elucidated by Moore (1998). Slaves are "clever" and able to establish a good rapport with the public, thus possessing more metatheatrical power, while older characters of higher social rank, such as the pimp and the noble Senex, can only make asides.

The opening song, "Comedy Tonight," raises important metatheatrical discussions of genre. The song questions established *topoi* and devices of comedy and tragedy: "Nothing for kings, nothing for crowns, bring out the liars, lovers, and clowns" or "No Trojan Horse, no royal curse, and there's a happy ending of course." Here we see the identification of comedy with low characters, the rejection of myth and fate, and the need for a happy ending – in this case, after a very complex recognition scene in which we learn that the courtesan and the soldier are actually brother and sister through the identification token, the ring of Erronius (Buster Keaton). The reprise of "Comedy Tonight" as epilogue encourages the audience to receive the film as nothing more than comedy: "What is the moral? Must be a moral. Here is the moral, wrong, or right: morals tomorrow, comedy tonight!" The overt denial of morality apparently isolates comedy in the realm of entertainment, leaving any satirical or critical aspect as sophisticated subtext. Comic amorality suspends the suffering, pity, and fear that would generate the possibility of catharsis in the traditional Aristotelian view of tragedy.

Paratragedy also intrudes, for example when the ridiculous and inaptly named Hero, upon hearing that his beloved courtesan has been sold to the soldier, attempts to commit suicide. As he declares "Then receive, o bosom, my fatal blade," the knife harmlessly passes between his arm and his bosom, setting the tone of his lost love with a lot of bathos. The mixture of love, bathos, and paratragedy recurs in his decision to commit suicide when he hears the virgin has died. The real Philia is alive and also decides to be sacrificed in the temple of the Vestal Virgins when she discovers Hero went to throw himself to the lions (on comic lovers' attempted suicides, see Dutsch 2012).

As comedy jostles with tragedy, so dialogue and action vie with song and dance. During song and dance, the plot is somehow suspended and action can only advance in between songs. For example, in the already mentioned controversial song "Everybody Ought to Have a Maid," Senex and Pseudolus sing about the advantages of "having a maid" in obvious chauvinist and sexist terms after Pseudolus quickly fibs that Philia is actually the new maid in the house. When the chief slave Hysterium hears them singing, he joins them in the song. Later, when Lycus the pimp arrives to ask Pseudolus about the plagued virgin (another lie created by Pseudolus to steal Philia from the pimp), we behold a curious development of a delayed dialogue similar to those found in Plautus. Since the men are in the middle of a song, a diegetic dialogue cannot take place. Lycus repeatedly asks about the girl until he realizes that, in this part of the show, the only thing he can do is join the song and dance. During the song he continues to interrupt the musical lines to ask diegetic questions, such as "how's the virgin," but Pseudolus, fully engaged in the musical mode, does not answer. Only after the very long and preposterous song full of visual gags and ridiculous choreography can Pseudolus finally answer.

As we can see, these metaliterary and theatrical devices help create a very modern Plautine play while at the same time fostering social criticism, modern jokes and comic styles, and parody of the already long tradition of Hollywood classics.

Alfonso Sastre's *Los Dioses y los Cuernos* (1995)

Alfonso Sastre's rewriting of Plautus's *Amphitruo*, entitled *Los dioses y los cuernos* ("The gods and the cuckolds," Sastre 1995), is a very self-conscious new chapter in the long chain of receptions of the play. Sastre makes heavy use of metatheater, anachronisms, literary allusions (including to the Latin text itself), comic and literary stage directions, and modern elements of performance as a way of recreating Plautine metatheater in a post-modern context.

The play is not very widely known, and criticism of it is also scant. Romano (1998) claims that Sastre's play is one of the first rewritings of Plautus to go back to the metatheater of the Roman *palliata* through the extensive use of non-realist devices. Diez (2012) compares Plautus and Sastre regarding infidelity, the role of women (Juno turns the tables on Jupiter in a very innovative way at the end of the play), and some technical devices, such as the rupture of dramatic illusion, but her analysis goes no further. Bertini (2010) in his analysis of Sastre's play puts it in the context of the recent rewritings of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Recently, Bourscheid and Maciel (2017) analyze Sastre's clever use of stage directions as important metatheatrical devices.

Instead of focusing on the complications of the doubles and the touchstone receptions of Plautus, such as Molière's or Kleist's, Sastre's play actually achieves a high degree of general metatheatrical effect both through the usual breaks in dramatic illusion, anachronisms, and literary allusions (so Romano 1998), and also by transcending the limits of realist classical theater. Sastre returns to ancient Plautine metatheater by translating these devices for a modern audience.

I shall examine seven passages to illustrate the main points of the argument regarding: (i) literary and metatheatrical stage directions, (ii) prolific use of anachronisms, (iii) extensive use of intertextuality, (iv) special metatheatrical devices. Most importantly, this chapter tries to construe Sastre's play as a self-conscious palimpsestic reception of Plautus's play, inasmuch as on several different occasions the "original author" and the "rewriter" merge in a complex, paradoxical entity, with both texts being simultaneously different and the same.

Literary and Metatheatrical Stage Directions

Sastre makes use of his stage directions not only to guide directors, producers, and actors in the usual fashion, but often inserts comments on the nature of theater and his theatrical choices. Here are some examples:

1. About the epoch: The action of this work takes place never, that is, always, I mean, in time (i.e. in the space-time) in which everything happens – yet they don't happen and will never happen! – the fictions of art, I seem to have made a mess, but I couldn't say it better. (25, before the beginning of the play; references to Sastre's play are by page numbers; translations from Spanish into English are my own.)
2. [After lights fade out for Jupiter and Almene, after their first scene together, aiming at a romantic effect] (...) I very much believe in the ellipsis as a great artistic device against the servility of naturalism. Naturally, a stage direction is not a proper place for presenting and discussing these themes. (49)

3. [Beginning of scene seven, right before a speech by Alcmene:] (... For the moment, what we hear from Alcmene's lips Plautus wrote literally like this:) [There follow Plautus *Amph.* 633–635 in Latin]

These small citations suffice to show how Sastre uses the space of the stage directions to enhance the metatheatrical power of his play. On the one hand, these are intended for the readers and not for the audience, which poses problems for an analysis of the performance *per se*. On the other, the stage directions indicate that Sastre sees his script as an autonomous text, bearing meaning on its own. He discusses many other issues of performance, translation, rewriting, and theater in general; for example, he discusses Brecht's theories and stops abruptly for fear of losing sight of Sosia while he walks toward Thebes (57).

Anachronisms

Sastre uses several kinds of anachronisms in his texts in a way that both recalls Plautus's use of this comic device and is meant to make a modern audience laugh at the new absurdities created in the play. For instance, he talks about helicopters (32), pharmacies (38), bikes (41), newspapers (45), the first war between Russia and Chechnya (46), Pterelas's execution by a firing squad (48), public security (55), the demon (58), bullets (59), telephones (66), the Teleboan separatists (69), ID cards (70), dementia praecox (93), the swastika (96), a double espresso (103), arteriosclerosis (107), military insurrection and subversion (129), and the parliament and the chamber of commerce (147).

Most anachronisms are simple and light jokes, but the ones associated with warfare, separatism, and firing squads introduce a grim and critical anti-war stance, equating *Amphitryon* with an imperialistic warlord and portraying Jupiter as a cynical god, never taking responsibility for his actions in the play. For example, Sastre's mention of the war between Russia and Chechnya (46–47) can be seen as a metatheatrical prelude to a dialogue between Jupiter and Alcmene in which she listens to his boasting about his victory over the Teleboans and answers, very worried:

(4) *Alc.* (...) I don't want to believe the bad people who say that in the war schoolchildren are killed on the streets, and the old ladies selling candies, and that women are raped in their kitchens by strong soldiers. All that's untrue, my love, right?

Jupit. (evasive) Maybe a case or two, but war is beautiful in itself, and, as Mars says, it's one of the fine arts, such as painting and theater, only stronger and more true. Do you understand that, darling? (47)

Intertextuality

Very frequent in Sastre's plays are explicit mentions or the implicit use of passages literally translated or reproduced in Latin and in French directly from Plautus and Molière.¹ Some other authors and themes evoked intertextually can be cited: Ruben Darío (30), Sophocles's *Antigone* (35), Groucho Marx (45), Shakespeare (53), Homer (55), the movies' cliché of being hit by an arrow and breaking it with your own hands (59), Descartes (69), the

Bible's *Genesis* (81), and Hemingway (104). Most instances of intertextuality are relatively episodic and can be seen as witticisms, but evocations of Plautus and Molière enhance the depth of the metatheatrical level of the play. Through constant references to the very performance the audience is watching, intertextual allusions call attention to *Los Dioses y los Cuernos* as a palimpsest, a rewritten actualization of the ancient play. For example, in the famous first dialogue between Sosia and Mercury, the slave speaks Latin, and the god reminds him that the play they are in is actually a translation:

- (5) *SOS.* This author...
MER. What author?
SOS. Of this play. Plautus.
MER. You are really insane.
SOS. This is a comedy.
MER. And there is a crazy man in it. (*Laughs at his own joke*) Just as in Plautus.
SOS. (*inadvertently switches to Latin*) *Timeo, totus torpeo. Non edepol (edepol: "By Pollux!", note by A.S.) nunc ubi terrarum sim scio, siquis roget, neque miser me commovere possum...*
MER. Cut it. You've just switched to Latin. And this is a Spanish translation!
SOS. Of course! I'm sorry! (...) (61–62; = *Amph.* 335–337)

In order to fully understand how the three previous elements work together, let us move to metatheater as a device in itself.

Metatheater

Sastre makes constant references to the author (Sastre or Plautus or both, and that, we will see, is very telling) and to theater itself within the play – and not only in the stage directions already mentioned. One of the most impressive examples of the blending together of the *auctor in fabula*, the intertextual connection to Plautus, and their metatheatrical effects can be seen in the next passage, a monologue spoken by Jupiter before he decides to resolve the problems he caused himself:

- (6) (...) I would also like to tell you that, although I am a god, now I'm all entangled in this, which is a comedy. I'd like to take a nap now, but this bastard Titus Maccius Plautus served me the double espresso that has made me awake as a motorcycle, and here you see me, citizens of Thebes (*A loud voice is heard: "Hey, Jupiter!" Jupiter looks at the audience making a screen with his hand*) Who is this? Would that be Plautus, the author of this play, or his little friend, that little Sastre? You'd better watch out, because irreverence is a great theological sin, poet though you may be, for I can escape your play as soon as you get a little distracted, and then, poor you! I'll see you in hell for all eternity!

(...)

JUPIT. I'll just put a hemorrhoid in Plautus's asshole, so he won't be able to sit and write.

MER. Don't be so harsh, daddy. Anyway, he can start writing while standing, like Hemingway. (103–104)

In this passage, the comic reaction of a tired Jupiter inverts the power usually attributed to the author(s), both in Sastre and in Plautus (cf. *Cas.* 65–66, in which the prologue explains the absence of the *adulescens* in the play with the lines “Plautus didn’t want [him to be here], so he blocked a bridge that was on his way”). The interchange between character-god and authors enhances metatheatricality by magnifying Jupiter’s self-awareness of his powers as a god and as a conductor of the plot.

Similar metatheatrical devices can be found in the play, ranging from simple comments on the nature of the performance to explicit acknowledgments of acts starting or ending, attributions of certain words to Plautus or Molière, discussions on the theatrical space, comments on the happy ending, and even Alcmena’s recognition of the paradoxical nature of the play for her as a character, since it’s a comedy for everyone else but her (cf. 100).

Sosia’s last monologue is symptomatic of how Sastre’s metatheater works in its veiled criticism of the author’s own times, especially his anti-war attitude. The play’s theme should be treated as a comedy, but after the final recognition and happy ending, the best everyone could do is keep quiet about all that happened. The comment is elevated and grim, and it contrasts with the general tone of the play, only to be interrupted in the end by the introduction of the last scene, the most important addition by Sastre to Plautus’s plot. In Juno’s final conversation with Jupiter, she reveals that she was disguised as Alcmena when Jupiter slept with her. Sastre gives a truly unexpected twist to the Plautine plot, which for the most part he follows carefully:

(7) *Sos.* We live, ladies and gentlemen, in the Kingdom of Lies. It’s strictly forbidden to see Amphitryon’s horns. It’s also forbidden to tell the story of the ruse in which the beautiful and innocent Alcmena fell, through the design of a libertine, almighty, and tricky god. Nothing’s happened here, and you who watched that secret and clandestine revelation written by Plautus and his little friend Sastre, with a serious danger of damnation for your souls, should be parasites, *pícaros*, pragmatic like slaves, if you want to survive in these calamitous times. Run away from the old romantic idealists who wanted to transform the world, those imbeciles. This is the New Order! Sounds bad at first, but one gets used to it soon enough. Oh, I’m sorry. I’m being told there’s a scene left. (*Looks at the programme.*) It’s an Epilogue in the Heavens. That must be a structural problem of some sort. (144–145)

After this brief analysis of seven passages, it should be clear now that Sastre’s rewriting of Plautus positions itself as a modern analogue to the very metatheatrical Roman New Comedy, with its constant use of stage directions, anachronisms, intertextual devices, and metatheater. Sastre’s is the one of the first rewritings of *Amphitruo* to successfully translate those devices to its own time, showing the great potential of the play to explore non-naturalistic devices and revive metatheater.

Sastre self-consciously rewrites the lineage of *Amphitruo* to create a hybrid play with a special ontological status, claiming to be written both by Plautus and Sastre. A performance-translation-rewriting of this kind is one of the first to be able to reinstate the contradiction of a play that is and is not a translation and is and is not an original at the same time. Such is the case of Plautus, who frequently identifies the plays being staged both as his model and as a new Latin play: “the name of this play is *Onagos* in Greek. Demophilus wrote it and Maccus translated it into barbarian language. He wants it to be *The Comedy of Asses*, if that is all right by you” (*Asin.* 10–13; cf. *Cas.* 31–34, p. 464). Sastre, like

Plautus, creates anew what is being retold, making a kind of paradoxical theater which is radically new and old at the same time. A thorough analysis of this kind of rewriting can shed new light on the old texts, allowing for a more diverse and meaningful study and teaching of the ancient texts. The absence of modern rewritings of ancient Roman Comedy that reproduce the sophisticated level of metatheater, one of the fundamental touchstones of the Roman *palliata*, makes Sastre's palimpsestic collapse of different traditions, hypotexts, and devices a particularly remarkable achievement.

Important testimonies of this self-consciousness can be found in the play's Preface, in which Sastre acknowledges and discusses previous versions of the theatrical plays dealing with the birth of Hercules (from the Attic tragedians' lost plays through Molière, Camões, Hernan Perez de Oliva, António José da Silva, Kleist, Giraudoux, and Guilherme Figueiredo, among others). He also mentions the Latin editions he used in his translating-rewriting and elaborates further on the matters of composition. Most importantly, his last comments in the Preface highlight the hybrid, paradoxical nature of the play he set out to write:

Those who come to our comedy, which will be called "Los Dioses y los Cuernos" should be advised, if they know the original, of the amount of liberties and additions we made to the story and perhaps of much of the nonsense we committed, anyway, with the good faith in your well-being and that you leave the theater having seen *a play by Plautus, but also – and at the same time – a play by someone who inscribes himself in the continuum of these words, and who has decided to stage the play (and not for the first time) in these times of great hopelessness.* (13, emphasis mine)

NOTE

- 1 E.g. for Molière: 32, 79, 132, and 110 (with Jean de Rotrou); for Plautus: 32, 54, 64, 71, 85, 90, 92, 97, 98, 100, 117, 120, and 122.

FURTHER READING

The following works present several receptions of Plautus: Lindberger (1956), Bertini (2007), Margotton and Hubby-Gilson (2010), Ferry (2011)(eds.) and Gonçalves (2017) (ed.) and for that reason and space constraints we will not reproduce the list here. Further good analyses of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* were offered by Cull (2001), Solomon (2001).

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CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Trends in Plautus Translation

James Tatum

Introduction

For a number of Plautus's most talented and resourceful readers today, translation affords a wide range of possibilities for approaching an ancient drama, a target text in which the art of translating it is but one of a number of possible responses. The expert philologist and textual critic is now as likely to turn to writing translations as any dramatist or poet, sometimes in separate publications, as in David Christenson's Cambridge "Green and Yellow" commentary on *Amphitruo* (2000), which he followed soon with a translation of the play in a separate volume (Christenson 2008). But just as often Plautus's translators now combine their versions of him with essays and introductory materials of great sophistication, written for professional scholars and well-read amateurs, all of it gathered in a single volume that draws on virtually every aspect of reading, translating, and performing ancient comedy.

The evolution of critical thinking about what Plautus's original productions might have been like led to this trend. C.W. Marshall's work on the stagecraft and performance of Roman comedy (2006) is now essential reading for anyone who wants to perform a play in the original Latin or in translation. And since Plautus's original performances were as much musical as dramatic events, Timothy Moore's work on music in Roman comedy (2012) will help any translator better understand how that ancient musical comedy might be recreated in a modern setting, whether in a traditional theater or outside on a college green. Developing a modern musical equivalent in both instrumentation and delivery is becoming as much a part of a translator's task as recreating the lines and meters of his poetry in contemporary English.

Exemplary Translators

Erich Segal (1937–2010) was an important predecessor for this approach in the way he crafted his 1969 translations to the style of Broadway musicals like Rodgers and Hart’s adaptation of Plautus’s *Menaechmi*, “The Boys from Syracuse” (Segal 1969). If today’s translators are inclined to take the same route to the contemporary rather than the historical reconstruction of whatever Plautus’s music might have been like, their model could well be in the rap artists exemplified by Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton* (Miranda 2016; see Chapter 17). Amy Richlin’s translations in *Plautus and the Mysterious Orient* (2005) were already making use of rap’s music and language before *Hamilton* appeared on the scene. While it sometimes has the reputation of being a form in free fall, rap in performance is anything but simple. For one thing, it’s not as easy to write and perform as it may sound, nor is it quite as spontaneous. For all its contemporaneity and wide appeal, American rap is as structured as a Rodgers and Hammerstein lyric or an opera aria. For *Hamilton* Miranda creates word play as exuberant and complex as the *cantica* of Plautus:

The ten-dollar founding father without a father
 Got a lot farther by working a lot harder
 By being a lot smarter
 By being a self-starter
 By fourteen, they placed him in charge of a
 Trading charter.

As Richlin also shows, rap isn’t the only contemporary musical form it’s possible to evoke. In her *Weevil* a.k.a. *Curculio*, she sets a lyric of Mme. Lola (Plautus’s old woman Leana) to the tune of the Golden Oldie, “The Man on the Flying Trapeze.”

The smell of old wine on my nostrils is thrust,
 Enticing me here through the shadows with lust.
 It’s near me, hallelujah, and have it I must!
 My darling, delight of the vine.

These lyrics capture not just the sense of Plautus, but his sounds (*obiectust*, “is thrust”; *Liberi lepos*, “darling delight”):

*Flos veteris vini meis naribus obiectust,
 eius amor cupidam me huc prolicit per tenebras.
 ubi ubi est, prope me est. euax, habeo.
 salve, anime mi, Liberi lepos. (96–99)*

This scholarly exfoliation is also developing with teachers and students who want to work exclusively on the reading and correct delivery of Plautus in the original Latin. In such a liberal environment even the most dedicated specialists may want to broaden their critical and esthetic vocabularies and learn what other approaches to ancient comedy can be developed. This willingness to combine tasks once judged separable – if not indeed

incompatible (“A very pretty poem Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer”) – is increasingly attractive to a wide range of Plautus’s translators. Just such an expansive view of the uses of the past is what John Starks provides in *Latin Laughs: A Production of Plautus’s “Poenulus”* (1997), which takes its student readers from the ground up, from construing the original Latin, to mastering the various meters involved, all the way to offering a detailed handbook about how to mount a production of Plautus’s comedy in the original Latin. Starks’s account of his project will be just as instructive for anyone planning a production of Plautus’s comedy in translation.

This kind of mutually informative intellectual engagement is something that those concerned with the reception and performance of Plautus engage in more and more. Such collaboration is a particularly important point for plays like *Amphitruo* (also spelled *Amphitryon* and *Amphitryo*). Plautus’s *tragicomoedia* was one of the most influential and admired of all ancient drama in the early modern period. Even though the fourth act and other parts were lost, for nearly 400 years the Italian humanist Hermolaus Barbarus’s reconstruction of the lost scenes of the play made *Amphitryon* eminently readable and performable. While his version of the missing scenes (*scenae suppositiciae*) has been of limited interest to modern textual criticism, those same scenes supplied a complete enough text that Ben Jonson, Dryden, and Molière could read and transform it into their own versions of the comedy. This history is a good example of the way reception study can encourage a broader sense of what’s possible to achieve in a translation.

Hermolaus Barbarus (1454–1493) is probably the author of the reconstructed *Amphitryon* that proved to be one of early Plautine studies’ signal contributions to theater history – a contribution whose influence came almost entirely through the later translations and adaptations of *Amphitryon* that it made possible. Thanks to Barbarus, so many versions had accumulated by the twentieth century that Jean Giraudoux (1938) was able to turn the history of the play’s repeated versions into the numerical joke of his 1929 comedy *Amphitryon* 38 – as if it were the thirty-eighth version of the play. James Martinband and Charles Passage’s translations of Plautus, Molière, and Kleist’s versions of the play in *Amphitryon: The Legend and Three Plays* (1974) make good use of Barbarus’s text, which Martinband uses to provide a complete translation for his English version of the original *Amphitryon*.

All the more welcome for Plautus’s translators is Anne Mahoney’s 2004 commentary on *Amphitryo* for intermediate Latin students. She completes the text of the play by including Barbarus’s reconstruction, along with notes that will enable anyone who wants to produce their own version of the Barbarian *Amphitryon* to do so. Working in the same spirit as Passage and Martinband, she points out how important Barbarus’s *scaenae suppositiciae* or “substitution scenes” have been for the reception of the play, from Molière until the twentieth century, and for that reason she provides the complete Latin text with Barbarus’s supplement, together with glosses on a facing page, in Latin, and with further notes and vocabulary in English in the back. Since neither Barbarus nor his contemporaries fully understood how Plautus’s intricate prosody works, Mahoney simply prints the concluding scenes of the Barbarian *Amphitryon* in prose rather than in Barbarus’s incorrect versification.

The story of *Amphitryon*’s recovery illustrates how productively the arts of translation and philology can be intertwined. Far from being engaged in the kind of disciplinary and professional rivalry once exemplified by Bentley’s strictures on Pope’s *Iliad*, textual critics

and cultural historians are now willing to incorporate both philological and historical method and translation into a single, formidable package.

John Barsby's (1986) translation of *Bacchides* offers a prime example of this kind of comprehensive volume. This play has long attracted an increasing number of translators inspired by the discovery of significant papyrus fragments of its Greek model, Menander's *The Double Deceiver* (*Dis Exapatôn*). At the same time, Barsby makes it clear that he was one leopard who was not changing his spots. An early innovator in combining translation with the most sophisticated kind of historical and philological work, he nonetheless takes pains to warn his readers of all the ways his translation is *not* to be used.

It is not intended for the interested general reader, nor is it an acting version for a modern stage performance; nor again is it written as a "crib," though it stays close enough to the Latin to serve this as a secondary function. Its primary aim is to provide for the serious student with little or no Latin the nearest possible substitute for reading the play in the original language. (p. 18)

This is in much the same spirit as the austere notice above the entrance to the library of the Warburg Institute: *Otiosis hic locus non est. Discede morator*. ("This place is not for leisure-lovers. Idler, depart."). Barsby's sober volume was a great resource for students and teachers of Plautus in the years before Wolfgang de Melo's 2011–2013 edition and translation finally replaced Paul Nixon's 1916–1977 Loeb versions.

John Henderson adopted a more relaxed manner but fortified his translation in much the same way. As is typical of his exuberant work generally, Henderson's *Asinaria: The One about the Asses* (Henderson 2006) has everything in it but the kitchen sink: a translation of the play, embedded in a commentary on the Latin text, along with interpretive and historical essays, all gathered in a single book designed to be read, used, studied, and not least performed by every possible kind of reader, for every kind of audience. Most importantly he directs his readers toward the *sound* of Plautus: "Ears will be an asset in Plautus's world-famous circus. Expect a histrionic thrash of hybrid, mutant, rhetorics" (p. xv). In contrast to the austere Barsby, Henderson's style is what might be termed unchained exuberant, as in this exchange between the youth Diabolus and the nameless scrounger he names "Palooka" – as in the cartoon character Joe Palooka.

DIABOLUS. Go, please. Lord, a transmission for me.

PALOOKA. Listening?

DIABOLUS. Listening.

PALOOKA. Diabolus, son of Le Gris, to Cleareta,
Mme, pays the fee of twenty minae, cash, no strings,
For Philaenium to be with him both night and day
This year's duration....And with no one else, either. (80–81)

Note how Henderson's translation is printed as much for the eye ("Mme") as the ear.

Translation and Its Politics

A translation of cultures, then, but what cultures? And just whose racism and ethnic prejudice? Classics today is an international discipline, and these are questions raised in a review of Richlin's *Plautus and the Mysterious Orient* (2005) by the Dutch classicist Vincent Hunink (2006):

R.'s choice for radical modernization and adaptation to a specific contemporary culture seems perfectly legitimate, but it involves a paradox. It does bring an ancient text very close to present day readers, but on the other hand it also excludes very many such readers who do not share exactly the same cultural background. R.'s book seems intended for an educated, American, Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking audience of 2005 that is also thoroughly familiar with Hollywood movies and cartoons, TV and show business, and mass culture in general. But what will an audience make of this material ten years from now? Or how will it appeal to a non-American audience today?

Hunink is a translator of Plautus and other poets himself, and his reservations could be made about many American translators recent and not so recent: they tend to be closely tied to contemporary American idiom and don't hesitate to bring that surrounding world into their translations of Plautus. Even a European with excellent command of English can feel left out, peering over the border, trying to keep up with what's being said. One thinks of a remark by the Trinidadian poet Derek Walcott: "The English language is nobody's special property. It is the property of the imagination. It is the property of the language itself" (Hirsch 1997, p. 73). The point is worth pausing over because of the political implications involved in translating a classical text.

Hunink's objection is political in its implications not least because Richlin's choice of American idioms with hip-hop and rap is itself political. Classicists often celebrate the fact that theirs is an international discipline, worldwide in its scope. Since English is the current lingua franca, the version suited to specifically American idioms that Richlin creates complicates this cosmopolitan take on language. The closer a translation draws to a particular idiom, the more it can become an issue in a way that professional scholarly discourse rarely does. From its deliberately banal title onwards, Richlin's *Plautus and the Mysterious Orient* adapts and transforms Roman comedy into an explicitly American political context. A formidable cultural and political critic and historian in both her work on humor and aggression in Roman culture, Richlin aims to translate not just texts but the cultural matrix they embody; Plautus thereby acquires a more satirical edge than he has in less politically engaged translations. Richlin makes this clear by politicizing the very titles of the translated plays that knowingly cross the border of American notions of political correctness: *Weevil* (*Curculio*), *Iran Man* (*Persa*), and above all, *Towelheads* (*Poenulus*). The dismissive Latin diminutive *Poenulus* is usually rendered as *The Little Carthaginian*, with a knowing wink in a footnote about the word's larger signification. But for audiences reading or seeing the play in translation, this literalism with the title is in fact slightly misleading because it fails to get the xenophobic nuance of the diminutive *Poenulus*. In my own version of the play I once gestured at this, with *A Little Carthaginian Goes a Long Way*, but that isn't offensive or vulgar enough to convey the contempt enfolded in the Latin word.

In many ways Richlin's *Towelheads* is wake-up call to the literalists among us. To a general reader or audience member today *Little Carthaginian* could easily be mistaken for a term of endearment, as if Hanno the Carthaginian were some kind of house pet. That's certainly what some members of my audience supposed. The Loeb translator Paul Nixon and his successor Wolfgang de Melo had perforce to be grammatically correct and render the diminutive literally, but in Richlin's choice of words you see in microcosm the difference between an accurate, literal translation, and one that conveys the cultural and political significance of the word; in effect she is engaged as much in the translation of culture as in the translation of language. Ancient Roman ethnic prejudice is translated into contemporary American ethnic prejudice, where "towelhead" is a racist slur, definitely not polite usage in academic discourse, and an insult specifically aimed at Muslims, Arabs, and anyone else who wears a turban; all emerged in American slang following 9/11. By translating Hanno the Carthaginian into "Saddam" – as in the deposed, executed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein – Richlin brings the parallel worlds of American popular culture and ancient Roman practices into full equation with rap music and trash talk; this makes for an uncommonly provocative script for American audiences. As a cultural historian, she is concerned with

Roman attitudes toward the people they conquered, especially in Africa and the Near East [...] Roman humor, invective, xenophobia, and ethnic stereotyping [...] Roman attitudes that arguably amount to a kind of racism and...imperialism...expressed in comedy and pop culture. (2005, p. 14)

This led her to adopt the kind of Orientalist clichés that Edward Said exposed in *Orientalism* in 1978, and specifically the kind of racist clichés engendered by the American invasion of Iraq in 2003.

With Richlin's translation, *Poenulus* has become a test case for how much of the political culture of Plautus's ancient Rome can be translated into a contemporary setting, for contemporary audiences. Janet Burroway (1995, p. 63) earlier provided a lively translation of what was then a rarely read or performed play by rendering the speech of the Carthaginian Hanno as a mixture of gibberish and near-misses of English words:

*I thoo my minalom and semicolon
Calakkie mum a schythe and sticky barka
Liffo kannutbe but be edan oy
By marob sillygism absobuttle*

There is just enough here to give the illusion that a comprehensible language is being spoken. For one really is, as Louis Gray (1923) was able to demonstrate: Hanno's lines are authentic Punic, definitely not incomprehensible gibberish. Plautine scholars after Gray began to propose that these lines would have been delivered originally to an audience containing enough members who would have been able to understand all or part of what Hanno is saying. There is a genuine burlesque of Punic in the ensuing scene, where the youth Agorastocles's clever slave Milphio pretends to speak Punic and then "translates" Hanno's Punic for his master, as in Burroway's version:

- MILPH. Uh...*HOW*. Uh. Where are you folks from?
 HANN. *Anobun myth am bull, yoo dratit annuuch.*
 AGORA. What did he say?
 MILPH. He says his name is Hanno.
 Er...comes from Carthage, son of Mythembull.
 HANN. *How!*
 MILPH. He says hello.
 HANN. *Hondutti.*
 MILPH. Yes sir!
 Listen to that: he's offering you a handout. (1995, p. 66)

By contrast, the logic of *Towelheads* requires Hanno's Punic language to shift to Arabic. Greco-Roman and Punic names are also changed to an appropriately exotic ethnicity: Agorastocles is now "Boris," Hanno is "Saddam," and Milphio is "Igor."

- BORIS. Go up and ask him what he wants, why he's come,
 Who he is, where he's from, what city; spare no effort.
 IGOR. Salami. Where are you from, or from what town?
 SADDAM. Saddam bin Muthumbaleh ooga booga akbar.
 BORIS. What's he say?
 IGOR. He says his name is Saddam, he's from Baghdad. He's the son of
 Muthumbaleh, also from Baghdad.
 SADDAM. Salami.
 IGOR. He says hi.
 SADDAM. Gimel.
 IGOR. He wants to give you
 Some kind of gift, I dunno. Did you hear him promise?
 BORIS. Greet him in return in Arabic from me.
 IGOR. Salami gimel, he says to you, from him.
 Saddam (points to mouth) Sheikh, falafel. (2005, p. 232)

Following the theory that this is authentic Punic that would have been understood by some people in the audience, Richlin includes quotes from a related Semitic language, for lighting Sabbath candles (*Baruch ... shel yom tove*) and for blessing the wine (*Baruch ... ha-gafen*). Theoretically some in Richlin's audiences might also halfway understand Hanno's "Punic," and she hypothesizes that any Jewish members of the audience will hear the Hebrew and respond appropriately.

- Saddam: *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheynu melech*
Ha-olom, asher kid-sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav
V'tsi-va-nu l'had-lik ner shel yom tov. (Awaits response "Amen" from all
 Jews in audience.)
Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheynu melech
Ha-olam bo-rey p'ree ha-ga-fen. (Takes a sip from his hipflask. Awaits
 response "Amen" from all Jews in audience.) (2005, p. 230)

This is an ingenious approximation of what may be expected from at least some members of Plautus's audiences. Whether Jews in an actual audience will be as observant as Richlin desires is an open question. In any case Saddam, a.k.a. Hanno, then goes into full flight with a farrago of American slang, along with familiar Yiddish, Russian, and pseudo-Arabic.

Lollapalooza Vladimir shish-kebab
 Abracadabra gesundheit ish ka bibble
 Alakazam Aladdin Ali al-Boris
 Mekka lekka hi mekka hiney ho
 Salami salami baloney open sesame. (2005, p. 230)

Following immediately, the miasma clears and Hanno's Latin prayer comes through as clearly and simply as Burroway or de Melo would render it:

O gods and goddesses who guard this city,
 I pray that what I have come here to do
 I may do well: that you will grant to me
 To find my daughters and my brother's son. (2005, p. 230)

The expansion of a performable Plautine canon has made once-ignored comedies entirely as familiar as *Miles* or *Menaechmi*. That Barsby, Henderson, and Richlin would all choose to translate and comment so extensively on some Plautine comedies once rarely performed or even read does much to define the high expectations translators and teachers now have for any play of his that survives – even ones that are missing significant portions of text.

An Exemplary Crossover

Toward the end of a long and distinguished career as a translator of Aristophanes, Douglass Parker turned to translating Plautus, bringing to the task a lifetime's experience as a deeply learned poet and gifted pedagogue. With *Bacchides* as "The Wild, Wild Women," Parker's turn to Plautus was good news for Roman comedy (Berg and Parker 1999). His *Lysistrata* (Parker 1964) is the most-performed English translation of all of ancient comedy, in no small part because of the play's topical relevance to American wars in Vietnam and, more recently, Iraq. It also contains the single most quoted line in contemporary translations of Greek drama, spoken by an aroused Spartan delegate brandishing an enormous phallus and a Southern Hillbilly dialect at astonished Athenian men in the middle of their wives' famous sex-strike: "It hain't the heat, hit's the tumidity."

For all these reasons Parker's translation of *Bacchides* is one of the most important developments in Plautine translation of recent date. As with Barsby's translation and commentary, Parker was drawn into an equally ambitious project, creating a performable script for the lost hundreds of lines in its opening scenes. Whether anyone else besides Parker

himself will be able to follow this accomplished translator of ancient comedy at the same level remains to be seen. Of his version of the missing lines, which he terms the lost “PreAct” of *Bacchides*, Parker is as modest as he is witty.

Let me emphasize that it is not a true reconstruction of what inevitably must have been. There are too many variables in the evidence for that. Rather, it is a demonstration of possibility, a *frinstance*; and it is a longish frinstance, whose implied text might have run to at least a fifth again of the text we have, making this one of Plautus’s longer plays. This is possible and, I believe, necessary. My principal hope is that this preAct will start the play adequately and work onstage. (Berg and Parker 1999, p. 406)

Not content with leaving the script with comments about its paratragic qualities, Parker went on to create a pseudo-tragic prologue with the god Bacchus grandiloquently announcing a rerun of a tragedy that sounds like Euripides’s *Bacchae*, only to make a course correction when the actor playing the role realizes he’s started the wrong play:

*Behold me, Dionysus, son of Zeus,
At length arrived in this the land of Thebes,
Whom Semele bore, once brought to childbirth’s bed
By lightning’s blaze and blast and...
Damn, wrong play.
Of course. It’s not Euripides; it’s Plautus.
It’s not the Bacchae; it’s the Bacchides.
This isn’t Thebes; it’s Athens.
Accept my abject
Apologies, please. And now we’ll begin again:
Call me Bacchus.* (Berg and Parker 1999, p. 409)

The switch from high-falutin’ italics to roman type signals the shift in registers, from orotund tragic style to a brisker comedic pace.

What makes Parker’s translation particularly exciting is the way he manages to draw a clear connection between a comedy evoking the name of the god Bacchus and the events that led to the famous *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* of 186 BCE, which prohibited Bacchanalian rites, and then links it to the portrayal of the mysteries of the god Dionysus in Euripides’s *Bacchae*. Historians will want to debate this point, but for audiences it suggests that a once-forgotten play had a topicality few other Roman comedies have. The depredations of the Bacchis sisters and the two old men and their two sons and slaves are all configured as a riff on the tragic events in Euripides, all of it an oblique allusion to one of the most notorious (or at least well documented) episodes in the Rome of Plautus’s day.

If the dating is right, Plautus, at his career’s end, may have tried to be an Aristophanes. Roman comedy rarely deals with current events, but this play is *Bacchides* – the women named after the god *Bacchus*. And in the late 190s and early 180s, the recently introduced worship

of that god in Rome was a very hot issue. A cause célèbre was found: the supposed “initiation” into the Dionysiac mysteries of the wealthy young Roman Aebutius, in order to steal his inheritance, brought about senatorial fulminations; these culminated in the law *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* of 187, which suppressed the cult. A play about Bacchic corruption of young and old for money – what might its effect have been in Rome around the year 192, when the crisis was building? (Berg and Parker 1999, pp. 186–187).

As Parker is careful to explain, this reading is but one possibility, and he leaves it up to his readers to decide whether or not to go along with him. As *frinstances* go, however, Parker’s “Wild, Wild Women” is, in my view, the most innovative development in contemporary Plautus translation. Future translators have a lot to learn from studying what Parker achieved.

The Sound of Muzak

One possible benefit in tracking past and present trends is how they may suggest where future trends might lie. I’d like to round out a race to the finish by suggesting at least one characteristic of Plautine verse that deserves as much attention as we can give it.

As Parker and many other translators have noted, one of the most characteristic features of his versifying is the way Plautus jams words and their sounds together and plays on the sound of a vowel or diphthong in non-rhyming stressed syllables near enough to each other for the echo to be discernible – all this accompanied by an abundant alliteration of adjacent or closely connected words. In an exchange in Act III of *Amphitryon*, Jupiter, disguised as Amphitryon, infuriates Alcmena simply by trying to calm her down. To see and hear more easily what a performance of his version sounds like, the sibilants are in capital letters in their exchange at 903–907, from the moment Jupiter tries to shush her to Alcmena’s furious response. I’ll also note how many hisses there are per line to support my suspicion that Jupiter’s line is the lighted match that triggers Alcmena’s explosion.

JUPIT.	NimiS iracunda eS. (<i>trying to embrace her</i>)	2
ALC.	(<i>jerking away</i>) Potin ut abStineaS manum?	2
	Nam certo, Si SiS SanuS aut SapiaS SatiS,	9
	quam tu impudicam eSSe arbitrere et praediceS,	3
	cum ea. tu Sermonem nec ioco nec Serio	2
	tibi habeaS, niSi SiS Stultior StultiSSimo.	8

Twenty-six sibilants in five lines cannot be accidental. De Melo (2011) clocks in at twelve for the six lines of the original, enough to alert his readers to what Plautus perpetrates, though he doesn’t pick up on what I would take to be Alcmena’s cue, Jupiter’s hissing line.

JUPIT. (*trying to take her hand*) You’re too hot-tempered.

ALC. Can’t you keep your handS off? If you were Sane or had any SenSe at all, you Certainly wouldn’t hold a converSation, either in jeSt or in earneSt, with a woman you conSider or call unchaSte, unleSS you’re more Stupid than the moSt Stupid man. (2011, p. 105)

As David Christenson (2000) points out, this explosion of sibilants would also strike a paratragic note for those in the audience who know their Greek tragedy, as in Euripides's furious line for Medea to Jason, "I saved you, as all these Greeks here well know" (*esôs s' hôs isasin Hellênôn hôsoi*, *Medea* 476). De Melo has made the figure clear and audible, but he doesn't overdo it, perhaps thinking that to translate too faithfully would create something closer to a tongue-twister like "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers" than alliterative poetry.

The only problem is that Plautus *loves* tongue-twisters and for that very reason has stuffed these lines with far more sibilants than either Nixon or de Melo could stand, and so far as Medea's line in Euripides goes, what results is more likely an outrageous parody of the figure than simply a learned echo of it. It's assonance on parade, as is often the case in Plautus.

Comparing de Melo and Nixon raises a practical point that should be made about the enduring relevance of Paul Nixon's Loeb translation, and the fate of translations generally. Of course they go out of fashion and must be replaced. But translators also need to study what their predecessors did, and possibly even imitate them until they can come up with something better. Above all, they should not treat the task of translating comedy as if they were writing an examination paper to be graded. That's not how creative translation works. The Latin text in the earlier Loeb edition should certainly have been updated from the time of Friedrich Leo, and while a good deal of Nixon's translation is well replaced by de Melo's, some of what Nixon achieved has not gone out of fashion quite so quickly. De Melo himself graciously acknowledges that Nixon is still well worth consulting for his oft-ingenuous response to the challenge of Plautus's lines. Here's how Nixon renders the same passage, with its sibilants again in caps – though like de Melo he doesn't read Jupiter's line as a cue for the sibilants that follow.

JUPIT. (*trying to fondle her*) You're too irritable.

ALC. (*pulling away*) Can't you keep your handS off? Why Surely, Sir, if you were Sane or had a particle of SenSe about you, when you think your wife iS immodeSt and tell her So yourSelf, you wouldn't hold any converSa-tion with her at all in jeSt or earneSt, unleSS you were the SillySt of Silly men. (1916, p. 95)

With 18 sibilants, Nixon gets closer to the sounds of Plautus's original lines than de Melo now does; note especially how he manages a concentration of S's in the concluding sentence, where the aural effect reaches its loudest point.

Out of date though he is in many respects, Nixon was acutely sensitive to the sounds of Plautus's Latin and had a vivid conception of how the scene should work even within the rigorous confines of a Loeb translation. Where de Melo has "*trying to take her hand*" to introduce Jupiter's line "You're too hot-tempered," which gives the cue for Alcmena's response, "Can't you keep your hands off?" Nixon's direction "trying to fondle her" suggests something less decorous than handholding is going on in this steamy domestic brawl. In any case, once you catch on to what Plautus is perpetrating, it's not hard to aim for a comparable syllabus of hisses. It's also possible to make sure the reader or actor

realizes that Jupiter, a.k.a. Amphitryon, is the one who lights the fuse for Alcmena's tirade. Highlighting the sibilants, their exchange might go like this:

JUPIT.	You're too prone to hiSSy fitS. (<i>tries to embrace her</i>)	S x 2
ALC.	(<i>wrenching herself away, silently mouthing "hissy fits" and in what follows emphasizing each and every sibilant</i>)	
	Could you poSS ibly keep your handS off me?	S x 2
	Surely if you were Sane and diSplayed	S x 3
	One SCintilla of SenSe or SenSibility,	S x 5
	You Certainly wouldn't converSe with femaleS	S x 3
	You SuSpect and StigmatiZe as unchaSte	S x 5
	Either in jeSt or in earneSt, unleSS	S x 3
	You're Stupider than the StupideSt man alive.	<u>S x 3</u>
		S x 24

This comes two hisses shy of Plautus, but at least the sibilants are now impossible to ignore, as they already are in Plautus's original.

The original production values of Roman comedy had much to do with this kind of obsessive verbal overkill. The reader will note that I've given a stage direction as if the actors were in a modern production, appearing without masks (*wrenching herself away, silently mouthing "hissy fits"*). Today's directors and actors might wonder how easily all this hissing would work within the conventions of modern performance practice. The direction I've supplied above might work well enough for actors (*silently mouthing "hissy fits"*), but what the passage as translated also points to is how much easier an exchange like this one would be to perform if the actors were masked, as Plautus's actors surely were. Delivered in today's makeup and with today's conventions of acting, younger or less experienced actors might well find passages like this one not a little bizarre. To them Peter Piper and his pickles might not seem not so very far away from such lines, at least in a modern staging.

But if this is the kind of aural effect a translator wants to create, it would be far easier to perform and enjoy if the lines were delivered by masked actors. The blend of what was originally conceived as an acoustic performance, if not compromised, is at least complicated by the naturalistic conventions of modern performance. Removing the distraction of actors' identities, a mask would complement the potential alienation of the language coming out of it. ("No one talks like that!" "No, and no one looks like that, either!") The focus of the audience – literally, a gathering of listeners – would concentrate on the masked identity of the actors playing recognizable stock parts (the god disguised as a warrior, the matron). The incongruity between an actual human face of an actor speaking such obviously energized and ear-twisting language would also be much less of an anomaly. This way the energies of the drama would be concentrated and experienced where Plautus wants them to be, in not just the meaning of the lines, but the sound of them.

Plautus's Most Plautine Translator

It might seem that the sounds of Plautus would be inimitable, something not possible or at least not easily achieved in modern productions, but in fact capturing them or recreating them in a different way is one of the great achievements of the poet Louis Zukofsky (1904–1978). Although it dates to an earlier time (1967) than the Plautus translations we have been concerned with, Zukofsky's version of *Rudens* is an invaluable guide to the one aspect of Plautine verse-making that is most in need of being tended to. He offers an intensely concentrated example of just how much the sounds of Plautus's Latin can be recreated in English poetry. In doing this he already had the experience of translating Catullus with his wife Celia, but for *Rudens* he worked on his own. Instead of attempting to imitate or recreate the polymetric texture of Plautus's spoken and sung verse, he arrived at a single metrical scheme that he uses throughout the translation: five words per line to translate whatever the length of line and meter might have been in the original Latin. Zukofsky would read Nixon's Loeb translation but then look carefully at the Latin Nixon was translating, and as David Wray explains in his essay in the *Chicago Review*'s 2004 centennial commemoration of the poet's birth, beyond this line-for-line scheme there was an intense focus on the words in the original line:

Wherever possible (that is, wherever the sense as he would render it allows) each English verse is to resonate with some aspect of the shape of the Latin verse it renders. Not a hard thing to do stated like that. What makes it both difficult and remarkable is that Zukofsky strives to locate the moment of resonance at the precise point of the strongest sense emphasis in Plautus's line as he hears it. (2004, p. 65)

David Wray's critical reading of both the Catullus and the Plautus translations draws on many parallels between the two works and traces developments in the poet's theory and practice of translation, first in collaboration on Catullus with his wife Celia and then on his own in the more ambitious *Rudens* project. Zukofsky was drawn to the *Rudens* because of Shakespeare's use of it in his favorite Shakespeare play, the late romance *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. Wray provides an excellent starting point for anyone who wants to engage with Zukofsky as a poet and reader of Plautus: an artist who knowingly translated both Plautine diction and style into his own preferred metrical scheme. By translating both Catullus and Plautus, Zukofsky found parallels between their lives as Roman poets translating Greeks, and his own: he came from a polyglot background of Yiddish and English to translating Latin.

Both poets (sc. Catullus and Plautus) translated and adapted Greek poems to make their own in Latin. And Zukofsky sees himself very much there: a poetic formation was spun of disparately inter-entailed strands: a childhood filled with Yiddish theatre, including translated Shakespeare; graduate education in English at Columbia and a teaching career at Brooklyn Polytechnic; intergenerational poetic friendships with Ezra Pound, Basil Bunting, William Carlos Williams, others; and the lifelong multilingual autodidaxis of a 20th century American poet of the generation after Pound and Eliot (Wray 2004, p. 53).

Zukofsky worked by fixing his poet's eye on the page to the left in Nixon's Loeb version, then he would look to the facing page on the right for Nixon's prose translation. Here, for example, is Nixon's translation of Arcturus's prologue (1–5):

In company with Him who sways all peoples and the seas and lands, a citizen am I of the celestial city. Agleam with shining star, (*touching the star on his forehead*) in me you see a constellation which forever rises in its season here and in the skies. Arcturus is my name.

To produce his translation, Zukofsky moves to a bifocal cross-reading that creates in his readers (and, one hopes, his audiences) a kind of double consciousness of hearing the Latin original sound *through* Nixon's English prose.

Qui gentes omnes marique et terras movet,
Who moves men maritime landlubbers
Eius sum civis civitate caelitem.
I'm of His Celestial City.
Ita sum, ut videtis, splendens stella candida,
See here splendid stellar candid
Signum quod semper tempore exoritur suo
Sign forever timely the season's
Hic atque in caelo: nomen Arcturo est mihi.
Earth sky name's Arcturus: me.

The advantage of using an unvarying line composed of five words, of whatever length and wherever a word's stress accent falls, naturally makes for challenging versification and translation; in one sense it's predictable, but compared to the metrical complexity of the original, it is radically shorter – and unmistakably innovative. Zukofsky's five-word lines are every bit as musical as the rap music of today's *Hamilton*.

For anyone who can read Plautus's Latin with understanding, Zukofsky's method in translating is thus anything but simple, and his great achievement is beyond question. He captures the sounds of Plautus's exuberant language in a way no other translator has come close to equaling. As David Wray explains,

The five-word form makes him do what an artist does in making a series of sixty-second gesture drawings. His eye, tactile and auditory as well as visual, searches the flesh of each Latin verse for the auditory as well as visual, searches the flesh of each Latin verse for the one or two words that define the attitude of its underlying musculature. This defining attitude his hand then strives to render, in a few strokes, to give a room as simple as the thing itself. Sometimes it is almost simpler, almost too far reduced for even the attentive reader to make it out, but never quite. (2004, p. 62)

Tracing trends is one thing; predicting their future course quite another. It isn't possible to know, let alone prescribe, where Plautus translation will develop from this point onward, but after reading Louis Zukofsky and his critic it seems reasonable to hope that translating the sounds of Plautus's verbal music may well be an important trend in the translations of the future.

FURTHER READING

Translators of ancient comedy must have a sense of humor well developed beyond whatever academic precincts guard them, as well as a willingness to leave scholarly manners and the body armor of footnotes to one side. Erich Segal's *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus* (1968) and Amy Richlin's *Slave Theater in the Roman Republic* (2017), as well as their translations of Plautine comedy, are the best available versions for those looking to recreate Plautine comedy in modern theaters. For the most commercially successful recreation of Roman comedy in American popular culture, the movie of the Plautine and Broadway musical *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1966) will provide inspiration for translators as well as their directors and producers.

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Index

- Accius, L., 26, 387, 409
actor, 5, 63–65, 393
actors, 5, Chapter 4 *passim*
 audience and, 51–53, 82, 295–296, 453–455, 462
 costume, 20, 23, 55, 188, 314
 cross-dressing, 7, 66, 102–103, 165, 352
 Greek, 35, 55, 237, 348
 images of, Figure 2.1, Figure 2.2, 54, 351
 multiple roles, 68–69, 85, 97, 129, 431
 orators and, 393–394, 398
 scripts and, 242–243, 382, 407, 409, 435–437, 450
 status of, 18, 22, 66–68, 348, 354–356, 393, 438
 technique, 18, 21, 56–57, 241–243, 252–253, 272, 273, 277, 431, 434, 437, 445, 447, 454–455, 483–484
Aelius Stilo, 380, 402, 408
Afranius, L. 25, 385–386, 394, 410
Andronicus, Livius, 18, 19, 21, 24, 25, 65, 241, 348, 383
Aristophanes, 9, 55, 68, 180, 181, 208, 253, 296, 348, 480
Aristotle, 8, 208–210, 212, 215, 218, 288, 399
asides, 145, 275, 295, 455, 457n.3, 465
Atellan farce *see fabula Atellana*
audience, Chapter 3 *passim*, Chapter 4 *passim*, Chapter 19 *passim*
 actors' and characters' awareness of, 82, 83, 145, 243, 246, 275–276, 296, 451, 453–456 *see also* metatheater
 diverse status of, 5, 11, 70, 131, 136, 141, 144, 272–273, 289–290, 302–303, 348, 349
 familiarity with dramatic conventions, 23–25, 71, 82, 99, 102–103, 125, 166, 241, 381, 399–401, 421, 462
 irony and, 94, 97, 100–101, 281
 modern, 462, 464, 467, 477–480
 slaves in, 70, 141, 354–355, 368
 soldiers in, Chapter 20 *passim*
 women in, 70
Bacchic cult, 154, 160, 176n.1, 229, 326, 481–482
Blesensis, Vitalis (William of Blois), 423–426

- Caecilius Statius, 11, 24, 238, 380, 381, 383–384
- cantica*, 57, 170, 216–217, Chapter 17 passim, 411, 416, 432, 474
- Carthage, 10, 247, 291, 292, 307, 322–323, 348, 401 *see also* Punic characters from, 118, 202, 311–312, 322–327, 352, 354, 412
- Cato, M. Porcius, 183, 229, 313, 362–363, 367, 374, 395–396
- cavea*, 52–53, 57, 291, 298
- character types or stock, Chapter 8 passim, 437
- adolescens*, 6, 110, 111, 124–125, 127–128, 193, 222–227, 239–240, 332–333, 335, 342, 398
- cook, 85–89, 98, 187, 230, 351, 352
- leno*, 118, 124–125, 128, Chapter 5 passim, 151–152, 181, 182, 338, 343, 365
- matrona*, 102, 116, 166, 167, 169, 173, 293–294, 338–339, 373
- meretrix*, 7, 111–112, 115–119, 128, Chapter 6 passim, Chapter 10 passim, 333, 337–342
- pseudomeretrix*, 115, 117, 118, 128, 337
- miles gloriosus*, 124, 152–153, 155, 157, 180–182, 305
- parasite, 68, 124, 128–129, 182, 185, 214, 228, 259, 276, 297, 313, 372–374, 421–422
- paterfamilias*, 125, 174, 184, 277, 280–282, 342
- senex amator*, 112, 115, 125–126, 166, 168, 170, 174, 333–334
- servus callidus*, Chapter 5 passim, 120, 123–126, 129–130, Chapter 9 passim, 171, 196, 239, 244, 342, 354, 455–456
- uxor dotata*, 70, 166, 168, 174, 277, 335, 339
- Cherea (Francesco de' Nobili), 438
- Cicero, M. Tullius, 49, 51, 52, 66, 380, 382, 384, 393–394, 401–403
- on Plautus, 380, 402
- commedia dell'arte*, 22, 241, 437
- dance, 18–24, 463, 465
- Demophilus, 112, 469
- didascaliae*, 62
- Diphilus, 31–35, 41
- Kleroumenoi*, 37–39, 167, 271
- dominus gregis*, 62–64
- Dutsch, Dorota, 169–170, 231, 278–279
- eavesdropping, 56, 275–276, 366, 455
- Ennius, Quintus, 19, 24–26, 86, 348, 382
- Epidamnus, 96, 99, 159, 292–293, 454
- epilogue, 113, 131, 167, 173, 175, 213, 465
- Etruscans, 17, 19, 21
- Euripides, 25, 156, 209, 214, 216, 251, 481, 483
- Alkmene*, 25, 103
- fabula*
- Atellana*, 5, 18, 20, 22–23, 124, 181, 232, 237, 244, 386
- crepidata*, 20, 25–26
- palliata*, 6, 20, 24–25, 55, Chapter 2 passim, 135, 173, 221, 238, Chapter 19 passim, 348, 351, 383–386, 437, 464
- praetexta*, 20, 26
- togata*, 20, 25, 232, 385–386
- farce, 6, 21–22, 94, 99, 102–103, 106, 193, 240, 263 *see also* *fabula Atellana*
- fides, 143, 156, 160, 187, 215, 309–311, 325, 343, 349, 423, 426
- Fraenkel, Eduard, 2–3, 308–309, 368–370
- Franko, G.F., 309–312
- freedom, free *see also* *libertas*, *liberalis*, liberty
- characters, 78, 129–130, 195–199, 202–203, 214, 322, 332–341, 349–350, 364–374, 385
- ideology of, 81, 136–142, 185–189, 269–270, 341, 354–356, Chapter 24 passim, 464
- Romans in audience, 66, 70, 136, 310, 347, 349

- Frye, Northrop, 6, 7, 34
A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, 462–465
- Gellius, Aulus, 228, 231, 238, 410–411
 1.24, 41, 253, 379
 2.23, 167
 3.3, 8, 24, 65, 380, 387
 4.2, 364
 5.7, 252
 15.24, 381–382
 16.4, 226
 17.4, 31
- gender, Chapter 11 *passim*, Chapter 22 *passim*
 audience, 70, 348
 bending, Chapter 11 *passim*
 ethnicity and, 311, 326
 female
 characters, 7, 336–341, 343–344
 in charge, 125–126
 collaboration among, Chapter 11 *passim*. esp. 168–170
 pietas of, 103–104
 virtus of, 212
 discourse, 172, 231, 277
 performers, 23, 66
 roles performed by male actors, 66–67
 sarcasm, 280, 287
 slaves, commodification of, 350–351, 364–367
 sexuality of, 336–344
 humor and, 274, 280
 male
 characters
 ideals of Roman masculinity, 120, Chapter 12 *passim*, 355
 sexuality of, 332–336
 nuanced performance of, 165, 168–169, 175
 roles subverted, 274–275, 280–282
 sexuality and, Chapter 24, *passim*
 definitions, 331
 heterosexual desire and marriage plot, Chapter 7 *passim*
 same sex desire, 175, 311
 social status and, Chapter 22 *passim*, 280, 352
 speech patterns and, 222, 229–231
- Gruen, Erich, 9, 308–309
- Hamilton*, 251–252, 474
- Hannibal, 10, 301, 302, 305, 309, 311, 312, 326, 348
- Hegel, 136, 361, 371–372, 374
- Horace Flaccus, Q., 68, 124, 338
- humor
 abuse, 350
 ethnic, 311, 312, 324, 352, 354
 insults, 18, 22, 170, 182, 232, 276, 311, 314, 324
 jokes, Chapter 18 *passim*
 “juxtaposition” 293
 laughter, 8–9, 41–42, 131, 142, 186, 226–227, Chapter 18 *passim*, 350
 names, 351
para prosdokian, 40–41
 sexual, 232, 272, 278–281, 341, 353, 463
- imagery
 animal, 175, 272, 276–278
 erotic, 226, 278, 281
 military, 141–142, 226, 280, 303–309
 mythological
 Heracles, 153, 209
 Juno and Jupiter, 170–171, 173–174, 273–274
 Jupiter, 86, 355, 425
 Medea, 86–87, 187, 483
 Troy, 11, 262, 303–304, 308, 465
 twins, 99
 underworld, Chapter 10 *passim*, 422
- improvisation, 6, 21–23, 69, 80, 83–84, Chapter 16 *passim*, 253, 432–433, 435, 436
- Konstan, David, 9

- Laberius, D., 23, 355
 Leigh, Matthew, 9–10, 125, 310, 398, 402
libertas, *liberalis*, liberty 113–114, 214,
 355, 365–366, 445, 454–455
see also freedom, free
 Livy, 229, 247, 302
 7.2.3–12, 18–22, 241
 29.27.2–4, 307
 39.8–14, 160, 326
 41.28.8–9, 306
 Lucilius, G., 387–388, 409
ludi, 18–20, 48, 288, 289, 319
ludi Apollinares, 48, 319
ludi Megalenses, 51, 52, 88, 302, 319
ludi Plebeii, 319
ludi Romani, 53, 201, 319, 321, 393
ludus talaris, 21
ludi Tarentini, 159–160
 Macedonia, 110, 301, 304, 309–310,
 347, 348
 Marshall, C.W. 240–244, 317, 473
 masks, 19, 36, 61, 66, 100, 288, 431,
 437, 484
 African, 352
 Atellan, 22, 55
 female, 338
 funerary, 247
 leno, 181
senex, 334
 slave, 37, 188, 351
 sound and, 252, 272
 stock types, 124, 129–130, 166, 247n
 McCarthy, Kathleen, 128, 130, 136, 183,
 193, 356
 Menander, 2, Chapter 2 passim, 123–124,
 137–138, 180, 213, 241, 251,
 253, 332
Dis Exapaton, 2, 11, 39–41, 89, 112,
 139, 239–240, 257
Dyskolos, 34, 110, 180, 181
fabula incerta 4, 77–81
fabula incerta 8, 222–227
Kolax, 381
 marriage in, 109–110, 119, 331, 333
Plokion, 167, 238
 metatheater, metacomedy, metadrama, 8,
 11, 51, 55, 63, 65, 66, 77, 79,
 82, 84, 89, 99, 104, 145, 171,
 173, Chapter 13 passim, 210,
 Chapter 16 passim, 396,
 461–462, 466–470
 meter, Chapter 17 passim *see also cantica*
 female characters and, 170, 211
 Italian vernacularizations, 433–434
 manuscripts and, 409, 411, 414
 Menander *versus* Plautus, 41, 222
palliata, 24, 26
 tragic, 211
 Zukofsky and, 485–486
 Middle Comedy, 33, 93, 181, 208
 mime, 20, 23, 244, 292, 349
 monologue, 105, 433, 454
 Menander *versus* Plautus, 39–40, 79,
 240, 258
Pseudolus's, 82, 146, 238–239
 slaves', 144–145, 368–370, 373,
 455–456
 Moore, Timothy, Chapter 17 passim, 317,
 454–455, 473
morigera, 155, 172
 music, 18, 21, 23, 24, 26, 41, Chapter 17
 passim
 myth, 33, 37, 209 *see also Amphitruo*,
fabula crepidata, imagery
 Naevius, Gn., 19, 24–26, 382, 388
 Ovid Naso, P., 123, 137, 423
 paratragedy, 86, 98, 105, 209, 215–218,
 255, 259, 262, 465, 481
 Parker, Douglass, 480–482
 parody, 26, 151, 209, 226, 262, 274, 321,
 324, 327, 401, 464
 patronage, *patronus*, 96, 195, 312,
 343–344, 372–373
 Pello, T. Publilius, 63–65
pergraecari, 239, 313, 386
 Philemon, 2, 31–35, 41, 114–115, 295
pietas, 215, 217, 312, 325
 pimp *see* character types, *leno*

Plautus *see also* prologues, *index locorum plautinorum*
 biography, 110, 265
 name, 1–2, 23, 86, 351, 415
Amphitruo, Chapter 6 *passim*, 116,
 209–213, 387, 461, 466–470, 475
Asinaria, 111–112, 167, Chapter 18
passim, 334, 476
Aulularia, 117, Chapter 12 *passim*,
 Chapter 28 *passim*
Bacchides, 112, Chapter 9 *passim*,
 151–155, Chapter 17 *passim*,
 303–304, 476, 480–482
Captivi, Chapter 8 *passim*, 213–215,
 309–310
Casina 112–113 Chapter 11 *passim*,
 Chapter 18 *passim*, 334, 342, 381
Cistellaria, 117, 199–201, 203
Curculio, 118, 223–227, 296–298,
 453–454
Epidicus, 113–114, Chapter 9 *passim*
Menaechmi, Chapter 6 *passim*, 116, 151,
 158–160, 429, 431–432, 448, 452
Mercator, 114–115, 167, 295–296, 334
Miles Gloriosus, 116, Chapter 12 *passim*,
 244–246, 291, 305, 335–336
Mostellaria, 116, Chapter 9 *passim*,
 239, 384, 398
Persa, 115, 337–338, 342, 364–366
Poenulus, 118, 201–203, 240, 311–313,
 321–327, 336, 413, 477–480
Pseudolus, 77–89, 115–116, Chapter 5
passim, Chapter 9 *passim*,
 Chapter 12 *passim*, 238–239,
 246, 304, 343
Rudens, 118, 194–199, 203, 215–218,
 291, 292, 371–372, 485–486
Stichus, 116–117, 366, 372–374
Trinummus, 118–119, 294–295, 401–402
Truculentus, 119, 151, 155–158
 prologues, 1, 68, 89, 144, 166, 303,
 399–401, 432
Amphitruo, 26, 67, 97, 99–100,
 207–208, 399–400
Asinaria, 61–62, 112
Captivi, 128–129, 213–214, 400

Casina, 23, 38–39, 42, 113, 144,
 166–167, 270, 400–401, 464
Menaechmi, 288–289, 432
Poenulus, 49, 52, 67, 70
Rudens, 194, 215–216, 486
Trinummus, 1–3
Truculentus, 237
 Prostitutes
 female *see* character types, *meretrix*
 male, 128, 296
 Publilius Pellio, L., 63–65
 Punic
 language, 325, 478–480
 Second Punic War, 247, 302, 311, 327,
 347 *see also* Hannibal
 stereotypes of, 311–312, 322, 325–326,
 478
Querolus, 420–426
 Quintilian, M. Fabius, 380, 394, 400,
 402, 410
 Richlin, Amy, 136, 474, 477–480
 Roscius, Q., 66, 189, 382, 394
 Sastre, Alfonso, 466–470
 Saturnalia, 9, 136, 147, 282, 305, 331, 332
 Scipio Africanus, Publius, 247, 301, 302,
 307–309
 scripts, 1–3
 genres, 23–27
 performances *versus*, Chapter 16 *passim*,
 446–447, 450–451 *see also*
 improvisation
 transcripts and, 12, 69, 242, 435–436
 transmission of, 382, 387, Chapter 27
 passim
 Segal, Erich, 9, 97, 136, 349–350, 474
 Seneca, L. Annaeus, 445, 447
 Shakespeare, 221, Chapter 30 *passim*, 485
 The Comedy of Errors, 93, 99, 161, 452,
 454–455
 Hamlet, 443
 King Lear, 456
 Measure for Measure, 453, 455–456
 Twelfth Night, 453

- Sharrock, Alison, 4, 80, 216, 239
- Sicily
 characters from, 96, 194
 comedies performed in, 35–39, 47,
 54–55, 292, 348, 351
 comedies set in, 290–292
 cult of Venus Erycina, 323, 326–327
- Slater, Niall, 85, 238, 242, 294,
 317, 354
- slave *see also* audience, slaves in, freedom
 abuse of 67, 176, 182–183
 enslaved person, definition via-à-vis
 slave, 361–362
 enslavement
 experience of, in comedy 78, 81, 181,
 186, Chapter 23, *passim*,
 Chapter 24, *passim*
 historical events of, 347–348
 of citizens, in comedy 130–131
 labor, Chapter 24 *passim*
 in Cato 362–363
 logic of, mocked 244, 369–371
 slave characters, Chapter 23 *passim see also*
 characters, *meretrix*, *servus callidus*
- boys
 commodified, 128, 174, 186,
 311, 353
 as personal slaves, 213, 366
 gender and sexuality of, 341–344
 iconography of, 36–38, 102, 351
 loyal, obedient, 143, 183–184, 229,
 367, 369–370
 manumission of, 140, 197, 198, 202,
 270, 275, 349–350
- men
 as sex objects, 350
 in Menander, 137
 women, 182, 201, 353
 cunning, 287
 effects of labor on, 369–370
 speech patterns of, 230–231
- soldier, braggart *see* characters, *miles*
 gloriosus
- soldiers, Roman, 142, 226, 230, 302
- soliloquy *see* monologue
- stage (*scaena*), Chapter 3 *passim*,
 Chapter 4 *passim*, 97, 215–216,
 Chapter 19 *passim*, 320, 408
- Greek, 32–33, 36, Figure 2.1,
 Figure 2.2
- early modern, 161, 429, 451, 453, 455
- Terence, 62, 94, 382–385, 397
 insults in, 232
 marriage in, 6, 109, 225, 331, 333, 334
 music and meter in, 253, 255
 prologues, 5, 64, 68, 399
 reception of, 419, 430, 433, 438,
 446–450, 455
 stock characters in, 124
 use of Greek models, 33–34
- theaters, Greek, 47
- theaters, Roman, 5, 48–53, 56–57,
 287–289, 319–320
- tibia*, *tibicen*, 18, 20–21, 53, 56–57, 63,
 83, 211, 252–253, 348
- Titinius, 25, 385–386
- tragedy, tragic, 25–26, 32, 35–36, 48, 69,
 71, 86, 94, 101, 102, 105, 131,
 171, Chapter 14 *passim*, 262,
 387, 445, 465, 481
- tragicomedy, 171, Chapter 14 *passim*,
 387, 400
- Turpilius, Sextus, 224–227, 229–230, 384
- Udall, Nicholas, 450
- Varro, M. Terentius, 18, 20, 21, 24, 380,
 387, 413
- vases, Greek, illustrating performances,
 35–39, 54–55, 351
- virtus*, 185, 211–212, 294
- Vitruvius Pollio, M., 50, 55
- Vogt-Spira, Gregor, 6, 241–242
- vortere* 2–5, 12, 65, 314, 462
- Wiseman, T.P., 19, 20, 160
- Zoppino (Niccolò di Aristotele), 439–440
- Zukofsky, Louis, 485–486

Index Locorum Plautinorum

Amphitruo/Amphitryon

1, 229, 453
33–34, 399
51–55, 207
52–53, 399–400
59–63, 207–208
64–89, 68
65–66, 53
163–172, 368
203–262, 303
231–236, 211
232–233, 230
335–337, 468
447–448, 104
470–471, 100–101
601, 99
615, 100
648–653, 211
654–658, 306–308
785–786, 100
903–907, 482–484
945–947, 306–308
1020–1021, 434–435
1062, 212
vase illustrating, 36–37

Asinaria

1–4, 61
10–13, 469
11, 61
80–81, 476
874, 338
894–895, 338

Aulularia

38, 57
587–600, 184, 370
715–720, 453
717, 53, 71

Bacchides

62–64, 153
66–73, 313
213–215, 63
500–572, 39–41
507–508, 240
540–551, 409
649–650, 11, 67
929–977, 303
1029–1032, 213
1068–1075, 308–309

Captivi

58–62, 400
110–113, 229
222–228, 129–130
439, 229
951, 56

Casina

18, 23
67–74, 400
81–86, 67
120–125, 367
153–161, 168
511–514, 89
729, 414
1012–1013, 113
vase illustrating, 37–39

Cistellaria

52, 231
784–785, 67

Curculio

1–12, 223–227
96–99, 474
150, 21
280–295, 297
449–451, 52

462–486, 51–52, 296–297, 453
645–647, 50–51

Epidicus

43, 113–114
208–215, 302
546–547, 339

Menaechnmi

1–6, 432
7–12, 290–291
72–76, 288–289
87, 228
93, 228
143, 56
152–154, 158–159
249–252, 367
258–264, 99, 454–455
263–264, 292
402–404, 63
835–837, 209
966–977, 371
966–985, 184
1087–1090, 99

Mercator

111–119, 369
120–188, 243
672–677, 369
755–757, 339
834–841, 296

Miles Gloriosus

9–10, 185
89–92, 305
138, 50
186–195, 104
208, 89
246–248, 244
429–430, 104
648, 293
685–700, 293–294
745, 368
791–793, 245
882–884, 245
905–913, 245
991, 287
1029, 245
1243–1245, 185

Mostellaria

84–156, 50
273–278, 338
817–831, 54
1137–1142, 398
1149–1151, 41

Persa

52, 89
123–126, 313
192–194, 349
564–568, 365
619–621, 364–365

635–638, 365
753–757, 306–307
783–784, 55

Poenulus

4, 67
5, 49
19–20, 52
126, 69
131–132, 244
142–144, 244
669–670, 415
950–953, 324
965–966, 355
977, 412
1179, 413

Pseudolus

25–26, 244
28, 240
75–77, 79
237, 240
394–405, 238
401–405, 82, 246
562–568, 246
568–570, 83
578–592, 304
601–602, 246
703–704, 209
881–884, 87
911, 56
955, 413

Rudens

1–5, 486
185–196, 217
535, 67
698–699, 412
914–925, 371–372
1389–1391, 372

Stichus

93–94, 53
221, 68
396–397, 373
446–448, 313
547–548, 366
762–764, 67

Trinummus

18–21, 1
23–26, 401–402
58–63, 371
230, 294
843–844, 67
989–990, 67
1028–1045, 294–295

Truculentus

1–3, 237
43–49, 155–156
931, 53

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